UNPACKING HR ATTRIBUTIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF POTENTIAL PREDICTORS OF HR ATTRIBUTIONS, TRENDS OVER TIME, AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF HR INFORMATION SOURCES

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UNPACKING HR ATTRIBUTIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF POTENTIAL PREDICTORS OF HR ATTRIBUTIONS, TRENDS OVER TIME, AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF HR INFORMATION SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

While HR attributions are known to influence firm performance, we still know little about what may influence these perceptions, how HR attributions may change over time, or what factors may moderate these trends. Thus, this study addresses three important, unanswered questions—(1) how do work-related, person-related, and personality factors influence HR attributions, (2) how do HR attributions change over time, and (3) what factors moderate trends in HR attributions over time? Using a longitudinal design assessing HR attributions of 200 organizational newcomers over a three-month period, this study expands the HR attribution research base by investigating potential predictors of HR attributions, trends in HR attributions over time, and the role that sources of HR information (e.g., frequency, credibility, and ease of access) play in moderating HR attribution change. Findings indicate that various work-related, person-related, and personality factors influence initial HR attributions, and that these attributions vary over time. In addition, there is evidence that frequency, credibility, and ease of accessing sources of HR information may moderate the trends in Legal attributions. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Angela Langevin Heavey is completing her Ph.D. in Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University's ILR School. Prior to her doctoral studies, Angela received a Master's degree in Industrial Relations and Human Resources from the Pennsylvania State University, and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Colby-Sawyer College. In addition to her academic accomplishments, she has held both HR and supervisory positions in the financial, retail, and manufacturing industries. Angela's research interests include employee withdrawal and turnover, employee perceptions of HR practices, selection/staffing, and age in the workplace.

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Brendan Heavey, for his unending compassion, support, and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, interest in the study of employee perceptions of human resource (HR) practices has grown, spawning research examining perceptions of HR effectiveness (e.g., Chang, 2005; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Wright, McMahan, Snell & Gerhart, 2001), perceptions of fairness (e.g., Tremblay, Cloutier, Simard, Chenevert & Vandenberghe, 2010), and HR attributions (e.g., Nishii, Lepak & Schneider, 2008), to name a few. Interest in this area has been partially fueled by evidence that perceptions play an important role linking HR practices to firm performance (e.g., Guest, 1999)—a relationship which is of utmost concern to organizational researchers. However, while studies examining HR perceptions as an antecedent to—or mediator between—the HR-firm performance relationship are available, less attention has been paid to these perceptions themselves. For instance, questions remain about factors that influence their formation, as well as their trends over time. To better understand how these perceptions exert their influence, is it necessary to engage in research which unpacks their formation and examines how they may change over time. This dissertation represents a preliminary effort to investigate this issue by focusing on one type of employee HR perception in particular—HR attributions.

Human resource (HR) attributions are defined as "causal explanations that employees make regarding management's motivations for using particular HR practices" (Nishii et al., 2008, p. 507). In other words, HR attributions are employee perceptions of "why" an organization uses particular human resource management practices. Early work in this area has found that these perceptions exert a significant influence on firm performance via their effect on employee attitudes (Nishii et al.,

2008), pointing to the potential role of these attributions. Indeed, the growing body of literature on employee perceptions of organizational practices suggests that perceptions impact not only employee attitudes and behaviors, but also key organizational outcomes (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Nishii et al., 2008) via these attitudes. Such findings illustrate the importance of considering the role that employee perceptions play in organizational phenomena, and highlight the role that HR attributions may play in the field of human resources, as these perceptions represent a key connection in the relationship between HR practices and performance. As noted in a recent review of the literature on HR and performance, the study of HR attributions represents a "sophisticated" way of examining HR perceptions, as it directs attention to how HR practices are communicated by organizations and interpreted by employees (Guest, 2011, p. 6).

While existing research has illustrated the relevance of HR attributions, this line of work has been limited to cross-sectional research examining HR attributions and their influence on organizational outcomes. While informative, this research limits our understanding of HR attributions, as we still do not know how these attributions may vary over time, or what factors may influence these trends. Given their established influence on firm performance, it is vital that we examine the temporal nature of these perceptions, as this has implications for not only our theoretical understanding of this construct, but also future research in this area.

Further, a more concrete understanding of HR attributions requires a greater focus on the factors which may influence their initial formation. While it has been suggested that individual differences such as personality and previous experience may

impact attributions (Nishii et al., 2008), to my knowledge there has been no empirical examination of the role that such work-related factors may play in their formation, nor has there been an investigation of how personality may influence HR attributions. Further, to this point there has been no examination of other contextual factors which may play a role. Researchers have emphasized the importance of considering contextual factors when studying work-related phenomena (e.g., Ferris, Arthur, Berson, Kaplan, Harrell-Cook & Frink, 1998), and while there are many factors that could be considered, I focus on the role of social resources and interaction. Specifically, I examine the role that socially-derived sources of HR information may play in the formation of HR attributions. While research in other domains suggests that social environments help to inform one's understanding of the workplace (e.g., Burt, 1987; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), this work has focused on examining how social resources influence one's understanding of job roles and responsibilities (e.g., Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), and there is limited research examining how such resources impact one's understanding of organizational policies and practices (see Shah, 1998 for an exception). Given the role that social cognition plays in the formation of general attributions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) via the processes of information acquisition and sense-making (Weick, 1979), it is reasonable to apply this logic to the specific situation of acquiring information about HR practices and forming perceptions of these practices. Further exploration of this potential phenomenon is vital if we are to gain a better understanding of how HR attributions are formed, and how they trend over time.

Thus, this study addresses three important, unanswered questions—(1) how do work-related, person-related, and personality factors influence HR attributions, (2)

how do HR attributions change over time, and (3) what factors moderate trends in HR attributions over time? These questions are essential from both a theoretical and practical standpoint, as it is vital to understand how attributions are formed if our goal is to extend our theoretical understanding of the processes involved and apply this new knowledge to practice. Organizations expend many resources establishing and administering HR practices with the expectation that these practices will work as intended, resulting in better employee and firm performance. However, given the evidence that employee HR attributions may impact the effect of HR on performance outcomes (e.g., Nishii et al., 2008), it is vital to increase our understanding of *how* this occurs so that organizations can seek ways to address employee HR perceptions. For instance, as will be discussed later in this paper, firms may be able to address employee HR attributions via improved communication channels and mediums. However, such initiatives are better pursued (and are more financially defensible) when implemented after obtaining a full understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Simply put, while there is evidence that HR attributions play a role in influencing the effect of HR practices, additional empirical examination is needed.

Thus, this research represents an effort to further unpack HR attributions by applying organizational socialization theory (e.g., Louis, 1980) , as well as the newer perspective of espoused versus experienced HR (Nishii & Wright, 2008) to examine the factors which may influence HR attribution formation, their trends over time, and the variables which may moderate these trends. To accomplish this, I focus on three classes of proposed individual –level variables thought to influence HR attributions: work-related (e.g., employment status, referral type), person-related (e.g., work experience,

gender), and personality-based (e.g., proactive personality, conscientiousness). In addition, I capitalize on rich longitudinal data to examine how HR attributions may vary over time, and how different sources of HR practice information (e.g., HR departments, coworkers) may moderate this change.

THEORETICAL RATIONALE

The conceptual models guiding the current study are presented in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed relationships involving predictors of initial HR information source use and initial HR attributions, while Figure 2 provides an overview of the proposed temporal structure of HR information sources (frequency of use, credibility, ease of access) and HR attributions. In laying the theoretical groundwork for this study, I first provide a broad overview of the HR attribution construct, and then describe HR attributions as they apply to the current study. I then draw from the socialization literature to discuss the role that HR information sources may play in influencing HR attribution trends. As part of this discussion, I examine how information source use, credibility, and ease of access vary over time, and explore how various work-, person-, and personality-related factors may predict initial HR information source use. This is followed by a discussion of potential predictors of initial HR attributions, as well as HR attribution trends over time. Finally, the potential role of HR attributions in predicting organizational commitment is discussed.

HR Attributions: A Brief Review

Prior to discussing the use of HR attributions in the current study, it is informative to provide some background about attributional theory in general, as well as the original development of the theory as it relates to HR. Initial inquiry into attributions

Figure 1. Conceptual Model: Predictors of Initial HR Information Source Frequency and Initial HR Attributions

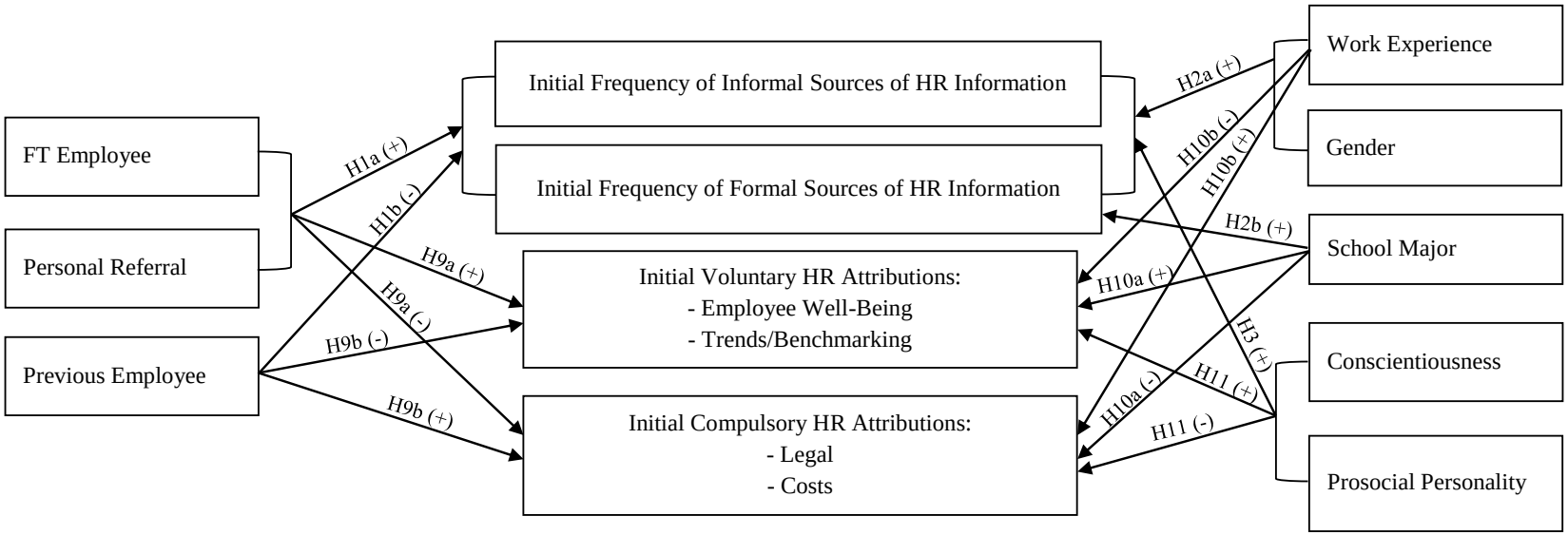
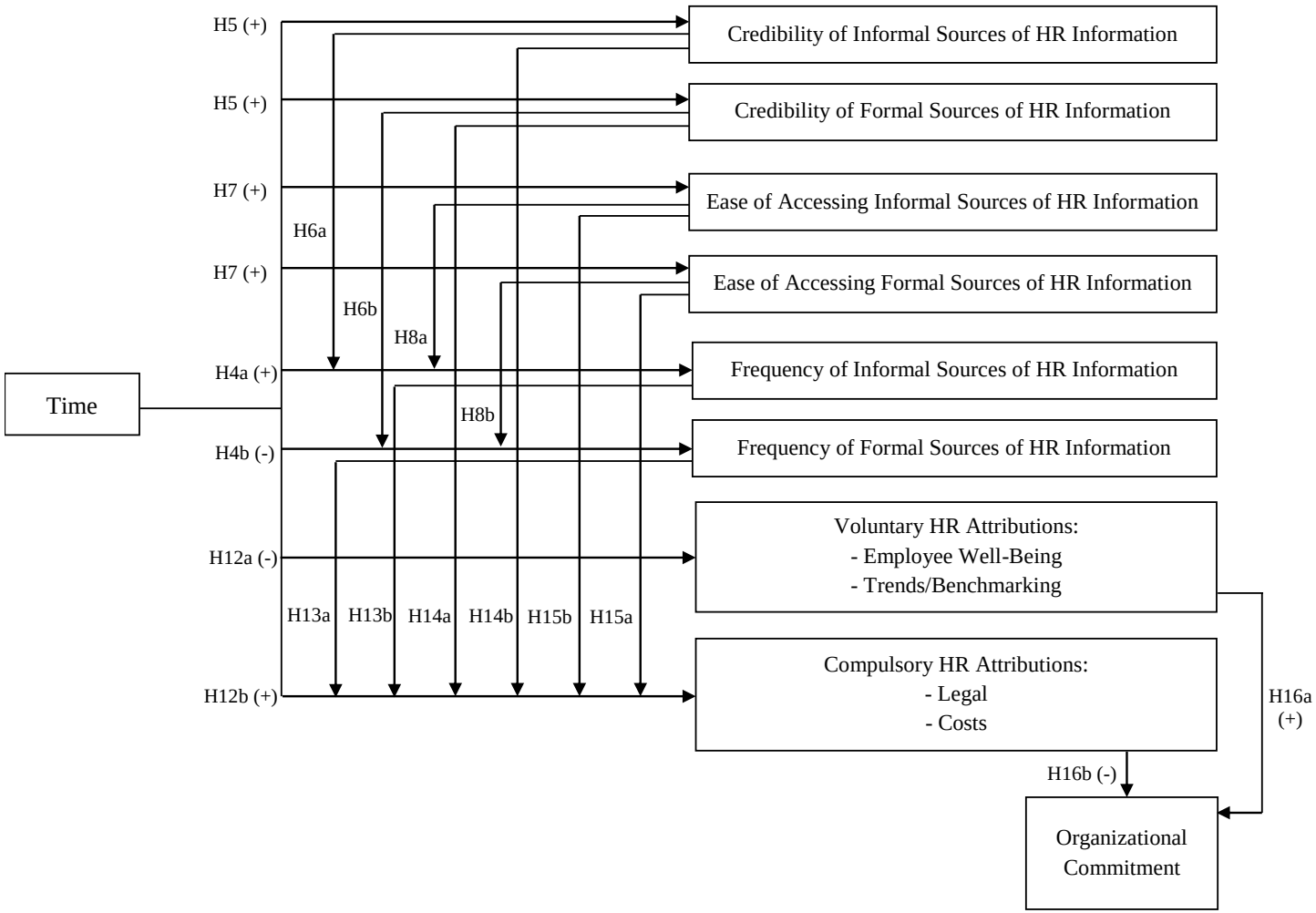


Figure 2. Conceptual Model: Trends over Time, HR Information Source and HR Attributions



began with Heider (1958), who drew from "common sense psychology" (p. 5) to better understand how individuals arrive at explanations for other peoples' behaviors. In this way, Heider's (1958) work focused on the "cognitive aspects of social interaction" (p. 5)—the study of people's perceptions and corresponding interpersonal behaviors (e.g., Jones & Davis, 1965). Later work in this area expanded upon Heider's original theory to consider additional issues relating to causality and consequences (Jones & Davis, 1965), as well as the application of this theory to social psychology (Kelley, 1967, 1973).

The construct of HR attributions draws from attributional theory and social cognition theory (e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991) to explore individuals' causal explanations for HR practices. In essence, HR attributions are an employee's perception of "why" an HR practice is used by an organization. In their seminal work in this area, Nishii and colleagues (2008) describe how employee attitudes and behaviors toward HR practices may depend on how employees interpret the motives behind the HR practices themselves. For instance, an individual could interpret a practice as being in place for employee well-being, or they might instead attribute the practice as being in place for reasons of cost efficiency or employee exploitation. Nishii and colleagues identified a typology of five HR attributions: employee well-being, service quality, cost reduction, employee exploitation, and union compliance. While employee well-being and service quality were categorized as internal, commitment-focused attributions, cost reduction and employee exploitation were described as internal, control-focused attributions. Union compliance was categorized as an external attribution. The distinction between external and internal attributions is important, as it highlights a crucial component of the mechanism via which attributions exert their influence. As depicted in the HR

attribution model (Nishii et al., 2008), internal attributions are associated with HR practices for which the employer was voluntarily responsible—in essence, the employer chose to use these practices. On the other hand, external attributions are associated with practices which the employer was compelled to adopt—these were necessary, and not voluntary. For instance, employee well-being attributions are considered internal because they are seen as a choice, whereas union compliance attributions are seen as external because they are necessary.

The difference between such attributions is important, as each has different implications for employee attitudes. In the case of well-being, this is described as an internal, positive attribution, as the employee perceives the practice as being in place for a "good" reason—to make the employee's experience at work better. According to Nishii et al.'s model, such attributions are expected to influence employee attitudes in a favorable direction, as HR practices seen in this manner signal the organization's desire to have a quality HR system which invests in employees. As such actions are generally viewed favorably by employees, employees respond through enhanced commitment and satisfaction. Adding to this theoretical rationale, it is also possible to apply the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960)—employees who perceive that their employer has practices in place due to a genuine concern for employee well-being may be more inclined to "give back" to their employer via increased commitment. Since they perceive their employer is doing something good for them, they feel compelled to respond in kind. In effect, employees may see employer concern for well-being as a type of "overinvestment" in its workforce. As research has shown, employees respond

to perceived overinvestment in the form of enhanced commitment (Tsui, Pearce, Porter & Tripoli, 1997).

Conversely, a cost control or exploitation attribution is considered an internal negative attribution, as this implies that the practice is in place less out of concern for employees, and more due to the employer's own interests. These attributions downwardly influence employee attitudes, as individuals see HR practices as being in place as cost-control mechanisms rather than employee-focused systems (Nishii et al., 2008).

Thus, there is evidence that HR attributions influence employee attitudes. As Nishii et al. (2008) also illustrate, this effect further influences important performance outcomes such as customer service. While research on HR attributions is still in its early stages, recent work has recognized the importance of this theoretical model (e.g., Guest, 2011). Scholars of strategic human resource management have highlighted HR attribution theory as a way to explain the causal process by which HR practices exert their influence (e.g, Jackson, Schuler, Lepak & Tarique, 2012), acknowledging their importance as a mediator in the HR-firm performance relationship (e.g., Jiang, Lepak, Han, Hong, Kim & Winkler, 2012; Messersmith, Patel & Lepak, 2011; Tracey, 2012). Numerous studies have also drawn from Nishii et al.'s work to examine workplace issues such as organizational values congruence (Howell, Kirk-Brown & Cooper, 2012), helping behavior (Mossholder, Richardson & Settoon, 2011), and employee downsizing (Maertz, Wiley, LeRouge & Campion, 2010). In addition, recent theoretical work has built upon Nishii and colleagues' model to elucidate how contextual factors such as trust in employers may moderate the HR-performance linkage (Kim & Wright, 2010). Thus,

although it was only recently introduced, the concept of HR attributions has already received a fair amount of attention by management scholars. Moving forward, I expect this attention to continue as researchers come to recognize the value of employee perceptions in HR research.

HR Attributions: Current Study

While the current research draws heavily upon the above typology of HR attributions, it revists the existing framework by identifying four categories of HR attributions, some of which correspond to those identified by Nishii and colleagues (2008), and of which do not. While further details about this typology are provided later, a brief description is helpful in setting the stage for the current research. As shown in Table 1, the focal attributions of this paper include Legal concerns, Cost control, Employee Well-being, and Trends/Benchmarking. These four categories are not meant to replace the existing typology introduced by Nishii and colleagues; rather, they are meant to show the range of HR attributions that may exist, and the complexity inherent in attribution research. In addition, as research into HR attributions is still in a relatively nascent stage, it is useful to consider the different ways that attributions might be categorized. Altogether, the Employee Well-being and Cost control attributions used in the current study mirror those introduced in the original typology. While the Legal concern attribution closely resembles Nishii et al.'s Union Compliance category (due to its focus on contractual/policy-related issues), I chose to adapt this category to place emphasis on legal concerns. Although union compliance attributions are important to consider in situations where unionization is present, the majority of workplaces are not unionized (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), thus this category may not be relevant for

Table 1. Typology of HR Attributions

Compulsory *"Have To"*	*Voluntary* *"Want To"*
To avoid legal issues (Legal) To reduce/control costs (Costs)	For employee well-being (Well-Being) To follow trends/benchmark (Trends/Benchmarking)

a large segment of the population. Accordingly, I chose to focus on legal attributions, which have a broader application across organizations and industries.

The fourth attribution category included in this paper is entitled Trends/Benchmarking, and is not part of Nishii et al.'s original typology. Employees ascribing this attribution see an employer as enacting HR practices to follow trends set by industry leaders, or to "benchmark" against successful competitors. I chose to include this attribution because there is a strong focus on "best practices" and "benchmarking" in organizations (e.g., Bamberger & Fiegenbaum, 1996; Jackson & Schuler, 1995). Despite the academic debate between the best practices approach and the strategic fit or contingency approach (e.g., Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Delery & Doty, 1996; Youndt, Snell, Dean & Lepak, 1996), much attention is paid to "best practices" in the popular press, exposing management and workers alike to these strategies. Accordingly, I expect that employees have some degree of knowledge regarding this business approach, and are in a position to make attributions relating to trends and benchmarking.

In addition to the four categories outlined above, the current typology also diverges from that of Nishii and colleagues by making a distinction between "Compulsory Have To" and "Voluntary Want To" attributions. The Compulsory category includes attributions that view practices as required; due to a variety of constraints, these practices are simply necessary for the employer to have, and are not enacted due to employer choice. Attributions falling under this category include Legal concerns and Cost control. While I do not make a distinction between internal and external attributions as Nishii and colleagues do, it is important to note that their work

defined Cost reduction as a control-focused internal attribution, as their rationale conceptualized cost reduction as a strategic choice on the part of the organization. While this designation suggests that costs should be subsumed under the "Voluntary" portion of the current structure, I chose to categorize this as a "Compulsory" attribution. This is due to my focus on the employee perspective; while an organization may or may not choose to enact an HR practice for cost control reasons (making it a voluntary decision), I contend that employees are not able to make this distinction. Rather, employees tend to assume that practices are in place for cost reasons that are beyond an organization's control. For instance, the economic conditions at the time of this study are such that monetary issues, budgets, and other economic concerns are at the forefront of news broadcasts, internet news outlets, and so forth. The constant exposure to these issues, as well as many individuals' personal experiences with their own economic woes, make cost control particularly salient to employees. Moreover, issues with communication within organizations may prompt employees to attribute cost control strategies to circumstances that are beyond an organization's control. For instance, even if cost reduction is part of an overall firm strategy, measures of cost control may be communicated to employees less as strategic tool and more as a "necessary evil" that must be done to remain competitive. The tendency for individuals to shift blame (e.g., Bell & Tetlock, 1989) is also a partial explanation, as managers who are charged with explaining and interpreting the organization's actions to employees may frame cost control initiatives as being in place for reasons beyond their (and the organization's) control.

Conversely, the Voluntary category encompasses attributions that view practices as voluntary on the part of the employer. Similar to the "internal" distinction made by Nishii et al. (2008), employees making these attributions perceive that HR practices are in place because the employer wants or chooses to have them. Attributions falling under this category include Employee Well-being and Trends/Benchmarking.

The basic assumptions guiding this paper are that Voluntary and Compulsory attributions are mutually exclusive, and that these attributions vary over time. In addition to expecting that certain variables influence initial levels of HR attributions (e.g., work-, person-, and personality-related factors), I contend that these trends are moderated by the sources of HR information that newcomers utilize. I now turn to a discussion of these HR information sources.

Sources of HR Information

One way to begin addressing the question of how HR attributions are formed is to examine the different sources from which newcomers obtain their information about HR practices. Research has shown that various sources of information may not only influence individuals' perceptions of the organization (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006; Cable & Turban, 2003), but also important outcomes such as offer acceptance intentions (e.g, Avery & McKay, 2006; Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey & Edwards, 2000). Recruiters play a crucial role in conveying messages to applicants (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006), and formal activities such as job information sessions are shown to influence applicants' perceptions of the organization (e.g., Cable & Turban, 2003). Similarly, efforts to improve applicants' perceptions of the organization such as organizational impression

management have been shown to favorably influence intentions to accept job offers (Avery & McKay, 2006; Cable et al., 2000).

While this evidence suggests that sources may also play an important role in affecting newcomer's HR attributions, this has not yet been subject to empirical examination. In addition, there is another issue inherent in the existing literature base which limits our understanding of source use as it relates to newcomer perceptions. This issue revolves around a narrow focus on more formal sources of information. For instance, there is an implicit assumption that newcomers gather information from formal sources within the organization. For example, information about HR practices may be gathered during the recruitment phase from recruiters (e.g., at job fairs, information sessions, etc.), during the selection process from HR personnel or the hiring manager (e.g., during interviews), or during the employment orientation process via formal orientation sessions, handbooks, etc.

The intention of this paper is not to argue the importance of such formal sources—indeed, the employee recruitment literature shows that the organization plays an important role in disseminating information to newcomers (e.g., Collins & Han, 2004; Rynes & Barber, 1990)—rather, this paper seeks to point out the critical lack of research examining the use of other, more informal sources of HR practice information. These informal sources are posited to originate from the context of the organization itself. For instance, there is a high likelihood that newcomers gather information from other individuals in their workgroup, such as coworkers. Research examining newcomer socialization shows that newcomers reach out to their coworkers for information about their new job responsibilities (Ostroff & Kowslowski, 1992) and organizational policies

(Shah, 1998). While this research is limited, it provides a basis for expecting that newcomers may *also* rely on coworkers for information HR practices. Further, given that individuals rely on proximal others for information (e.g., Burt, 1987), it is logical to surmise that newcomers would gravitate towards coworkers for information about HR practices. Indeed, the general literature base on socialization suggests that newcomers attend to a variety of sources to gather information about their new environments (e.g., Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983). While such research has historically been limited to examining how individuals gather information about job roles or organizational norms, the current paper draws from this framework to support the contention that newcomers also derive important information about organizational practices during this process.

Given the potential importance of HR information sources such as coworkers, I explore the frequency, credibility, and ease of accessing these informal HR information sources over time. In addition, the frequency, credibility, and ease of accessing formal sources of HR information (e.g., HR department personnel) are examined for purposes of comparison. To parallel my investigation into the potential predictors of HR attributions (discussed later in this section), I first examine some of the factors which may influence one's initial use of formal and informal sources of HR information.

Predictors of Initial HR Information Source Use

While not a central component of the research questions at hand, it is informative to examine how various work-related, person-related, and personality-related factors may play a role in the initial frequency with which newcomers utilize formal and informal sources of HR information. Figure 1 provides an overview of the proposed relationships.

Work-related factors. Work-related variables include an individual's employment status (i.e., intern, co-op, full-time employee), history of previous employment with the organization, and whether the individual found out about the position via a personal referral from a family member, friend, or current employee. I expect that status as a full-time employee will be associated with a higher initial use of both formal and informal sources, as these individuals are interested in learning as much as possible about the organization due to their long-term focus as a permanent employee. I also expect that previous employment with the organization will be associated with a lower initial use of both source types, as these individuals are re-entering the organization with prior knowledge of its HR practices. Although it is reasonable to expect that these individuals will still seek out some information, their existing knowledge base may preclude a high frequency of initial information seeking behavior. In essence, these returners may engage in satisficing behavior (e.g., Simon, 1979), whereby they decide that they already have sufficient knowledge of HR practices; they simply do not engage in any effort to seek additional information when they reenter the organization. While it could be argued that returning employees might engage in a higher frequency of information-seeking behavior due to a desire to "see how things have changed" since they left, I expect that satisficing behavior will win out, as individuals will decide they already have sufficient information (Browne & Pitts, 2004). Indeed, it is possible that this information was gathered prior to reentry, and the returner has used this information to make their reemployment decision.

Finally, I posit that personal referrals will be associated with a higher initial use of both information sources. Newcomers who joined the organization from personal

referrals may more inclined to engage in an active appraisal of their employer, as it was recommended by a friend, family member, or current employee. Because the newcomer likely received some information about the organization's HR practices from the referee, it follows that the newcomer may engage in a process to confirm or verify the information that was already received. In addition, it is possible that newcomers who were recruited via personal referral were not subject to the same amount of organization-supplied information about the employer's HR practices during the recruitment process. Because the newcomer was essentially "recruited" by a current employee, they may not have been exposed to the same recruitment processes (and associated organization-supplied information) as employees recruited through advertisements, job fairs, etc. While it may indeed be a fallacy, organizational actors may simply not put forth the same level of effort in attracting these applicants, as they assume the individual is already interested in working for the organization. The subsequent lack of information may prompt the newcomer to engage in higher initial information-seeking behavior.

> *Hypothesis 1a:* Employment status as a full-time employee and finding a job via personal referral will be associated with higher initial formal and informal source use.
>
> *Hypothesis 1b:* Status as a previous employee of the organization will be associated with lower initial formal and informal source use.

Person-related factors. Person-related factors include the variables of work experience, school major, and gender. Work experience is expected to share a positive

association with initial frequency of both types of source use, as individuals who have spent more time working for organizations may be more inclined to seek information about the organization's practices. Due to their previous experience with human resources in other organizations, they are simply more aware of this function, and are more likely to pursue information about the practices used. In the same vein, these individuals have had more exposure to HR practices, and may be interested in learning about how these practices compare to those used by their previous employers. School majors with an "employment focus" such as human resources or industrial/labor relations, are expected to share a positive association with initial formal source use, as newcomers with this educational background are likely highly-attuned to the HR practices used by the organization. In addition, they are likely to be more comfortable accessing this information from formal sources due to their schooling. Although these individuals may seek information from coworkers as well, a positive association between school major and initial informal source use is not anticipated, as it seems more likely that such individuals will prefer seeking information from formal channels. Finally, I expect that being female will be associated with higher initial source use for both informal and formal sources. Because females are generally more comfortable seeking help than males (e.g., Lee, 1997; Rosen, 1983), I expect that this behavior will also be displayed in the information-seeking process, as pursuing information may be seen as a form of asking for help.

> *Hypothesis 2a:* Work experience and gender will be associated with higher initial formal and informal source use.

Hypothesis 2b: Major in school will be associated with higher initial formal source use.

Personality-related factors. In addition to work- and person-related factors, it has been suggested that personality traits may influence the information-seeking behavior of newcomers (e.g., Miller & Jablin, 1991). While this research has been limited to the study of information seeking as it relates to tasks or work relationships (e.g., Miller & Jablin, 1991), these patterns may also apply to the current study of information seeking as it relates to HR practices.

Personality variables under study include proactive personality (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993), as well as personality dimensions subsumed in the Five-Factor Model (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & John, 1992). Proactive personality is a construct included in the larger framework of proactive behavior (Crant, 2000), and has been studied as an important personality dimension in organizational entry (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). A person high in proactive personality is described as someone who "is relatively unconstrained by situational forces, and who effects environmental change" (Crant, 2000, p. 439). The basis of this personality dimension comes from the interactionist perspective (e.g., Bandura, 1977), which holds that individuals are not simply passive experiencers of their environments, but also active participants. Based on the premise that proactive personality corresponds to a high degree of wanting to induce change or to better one's situation, it follows that high levels of this personality trait would be associated with high levels of information seeking from both formal and informal sources, as proactive individuals require information about their environments to successfully induce change. Given the evidence

that proactive personality influences organizational entry processes (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003) and newcomers' social interaction with new environments (Chan & Schmitt, 2000), I expect this dimension to play a role in predicting initial HR information acquisition.

The Five-Factor Model of personality (e.g., Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & John, 1992) includes the personality dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability, and is widely accepted as a comprehensive model of important personality characteristics. While not every dimension of this model is expected to associate with initial HR information source use, the full model is included to most fully investigate potential relationships. Of the five dimensions, I expect conscientiousness to display the strongest association. There is evidence that conscientiousness is associated with a greater frequency of information seeking (e.g., Reed, Bruch, & Haase, 2004), and newcomers high in this dimension may be more inclined to engage in communications with coworkers and organizational actors (Tidwell & Sias, 2005). Further, because individuals high in conscientiousness tend to be more concerned about performing well, it follows that they may also wish to seek information more frequently, as they have a strong desire to do things correctly (e.g., Tidwell & Sias, 2005). This may especially be the case with information-seeking about HR practices, as individuals high in conscientiousness may be more concerned about following procedures, rules or policy—things which are inherently associated with the HR function.

Hypothesis 3: Proactive personality and conscientiousness will be associated with higher initial formal and informal source use.

Socialization Theory and HR Information Source Use over Time

While an examination of the potential predictors of HR information sources is informative, the trends in HR information source use frequency, credibility, and ease of access are most central to my investigation of HR attributions. I now turn to the theoretical rationale for this component of the conceptual model as depicted in Figure 2.

As noted previously, the overarching theoretical perspective guiding this study is that of organizational socialization, which is defined as a "process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role and for participating as an organizational member" (Louis, 1980, pp. 229-230). The socialization process has also been referred to as the process of "learning the ropes" (Schein, 1968), reflecting the process as one which involves a great deal of learning, information acquisition, and sense-making. Overall, newcomers to an organization are entering an unfamiliar environment, and tend to experience disorientation and a sense of "foreignness" (Louis, 1980, p. 230) upon entry. The process of socialization is thought to help reconcile these feelings of confusion, and has been described as the major way in which newcomers adapt to new organizational roles (Chao, O'Leary, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994). While the process of socialization has been conceptualized in a number of different ways (e.g., Feldman, 1981), it is generally agreed that there are six major dimensions of socialization that occur. These include socializing newcomers on performance

proficiency expectations, people in the organization, organizational politics, organizational language, organizational history, and organizational goals and values (Chao et al., 1994). The current paper most closely pertains to the organizational goals and values dimension of socialization, although my discussion specifically focuses on organizational practices and policies related to HR activities.

The more traditional approach to socialization envisions newcomers as "passive recipients of socialization programs and practices," (Saks & Ashforth, 1997), suggesting that newcomers obtain information about their new work environments from their organizations via formalized orientation programs and socialization tactics (e.g., Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).This provides a formalized view of socialization, as it suggests that newcomers are socialized via formal channels, and are acquiescent recipients of information. However, newer perspectives of socialization describe newcomers as more proactive agents in the process (Ashford & Black, 1996; Fisher, 1986; Morrison, 1993a; Saks & Ashforth, 1997), and empirical research has shown that individuals are active seekers of information (Morrison, 1993a). As one of the first researchers to examine the link between information sources and the process of socialization over time, Morrison (1993b) showed that newcomers actively seek information about technical (e.g., job tasks), referent (e.g., expectations), and normative (e.g., expected behaviors/attitudes) aspects of the job. These information seeking strategies may include monitoring and/or inquiry (Ashford & Cummings, 1983); while monitoring involves observing situations and behaviors, inquiry involves asking questions and seeking answers. Thus, this newer perspective of socialization positions

newcomers as individuals who are actively seeking information about their new work environments.

The current research relies on this view of proactive socialization to describe the process involved with newcomers' acquisition of HR practice information. Just as newcomers are gathering information about their job roles and responsibilities (e.g., Morrison, 1993b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992) to better understand their place in the organization, I posit that newcomers are also actively gathering information about their organization's HR policies and procedures to better understand how their organization manages its employment practices. In addition, I suggest that newcomers access different sources of information during the process. Specifically, I posit that while individuals do indeed obtain information about HR practices from formalized sources, they also access information via informal channels.

Existing research supports this supposition, as scholars have found evidence that newcomers obtain information about their jobs and responsibilities from coworkers (e.g., Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), and a recent meta-analysis shows that coworkers are a significant source of information (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Of particular relevance to the current study is the finding that coworkers not only provide information about social norms, but are also sources of information about organizational policies (Shah, 1998).

The social information processing approach (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) provides further support for the use of informal sources of information. Subsumed within organizational socialization theory, the social information processing approach offers a more detailed depiction of the processes involved with newcomer information

acquisition. The social information processing approach describes how newcomers engage in a sense-making process (e.g., Weick, 1979) to form their perceptions of the workplace. In this process, existing group members act as "agents of socialization" (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998), who provide informal (and sometimes unconscious) advice, support, and social cues to new group members. As newcomers engage in social interactions, they use these cues to make sense of their environment and adapt themselves accordingly. Because newcomers rely so heavily on cues from others (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), they maintain a high awareness of their surroundings, absorbing a great deal of information from those around them.

Just as socially-derived information might be used to make sense of roles, needed abilities and skills, socialization with coworkers might also impact how newcomers make sense of the HR practices used by the organization. Existing research shows that newcomers rely on coworkers and managers for obtaining information during the socialization process (e.g., Ostroff & Kowslowski, 1992; Shah, 1998), and that newcomers are influenced by others (e.g., Festinger, 1954). Given that information relating to general organizational policies and HR practices tends to be diffuse and often confusing to newcomers, it follows that there may be an inherent amount of uncertainty associated with these policies and practices. In addition, it is likely that newcomers may feel that they have limited or inadequate information about HR practices. As the socialization literature suggests, when newcomers perceive a lack of information or uncertainty, they have a desire to correct this (e.g., Fang, Duffy & Shaw, 2011) by actively seeking information from the sources available to them.

Frequency. Thus, drawing from the theory outlined above, I expect that in addition to formal sources, newcomers will utilize informal sources (e.g., coworkers) for information about HR practices. This is expected due to the proximal nature of coworkers (Burt, 1987), who are present and accessible sources of information. People choose the sources of information to which they attend (Settoon & Adkins, 1997), and this choice is often guided by the availability of the source itself (Marshall, West & Aitkin, 2011). Newcomers engage in frequent interactions with their coworkers (Ho & Levesque, 2005), which provides more opportunities to ask questions and obtain information from these individuals. As newcomers are socialized into their workgroup and build their social networks (Ashford & Black, 1996; Burt, 1987; Nelson & Quick, 1996), exchanges with coworkers increase, and this uptick in interactions offer more chances for newcomers to use coworkers for obtaining information about HR practices.

Hypothesis 4a: Newcomers' frequency of informal source use will increase over time.

Conversely, I hypothesize that newcomers' use of formal sources (e.g., HR personnel/departments) will decrease over time during the socialization period. Although I expect that newcomers will actively attend to formal sources early in the process due to their exposure to formalized early socialization processes such as orientation, I anticipate that the use of these sources will wane over time. This is mainly due to the change in proximity of sources; while formal sources are more proximate early in the process during recruitment, selection, and orientation, these sources become less salient as the newcomer engages with their workgroup (e.g., Feldman, 1976), as they have the opportunity to interact with the coworkers more readily than formal

sources such as HR personnel. Following Burt's (1987) contention that individuals rely on the most proximal sources of information, I expect that newcomers will use less-proximate formal sources less frequently over time, as informal sources will be more readily available and accessible.

Hypothesis 4b: Newcomers' frequency of formal source use will decrease over time.

Credibility. In addition to examining the frequency of information source use, it is informative to explore how newcomers' perceptions of the credibility of informal and formal sources of HR information may influence the use of these sources. Credibility has been defined as "a perceiver's assessment of believability, or of whether a given speaker is likely to provide messages that will be reliable guides to belief and behavior" (Simons, 2002, p. 22; O'Keefe, 1990). As Simons (2002) notes, credibility is considered to be a perception about an information source that is ascribed by a perceiver—in this case, the newcomer. Over time, I expect that newcomer perceptions of source credibility will change as individuals become socialized into the organization. Specifically, I expect that perceptions of both formal and informal source credibility will increase over time. This is due to newcomers associating formal sources with authority (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004), and newcomers becoming more familiar with—and trusting of—informal sources (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004).

Hypothesis 5: Newcomers' perceptions of the credibility of informal and formal sources will increase over time.

Credibility is also important to consider as a potential moderator of HR information source use, as perceptions of credibility could have implications for the manner in

which newcomers utilize different sources of information. Individuals are more likely to utilize sources which they perceive as credible (e.g., Kerstetter & Cho, 2004), and there is evidence that credibility influences the information-seeking behavior of individuals (Fedor, Rensvold, & Adams, 1992; Morrison & Vancouver, 2000; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). Thus, I expect that perceptions of credibility will influence the use of both informal and formal sources of HR information over time.

> *Hypothesis 6a*: Newcomers' perceptions of informal information source credibility will moderate the frequency of informal information source use such that higher perceptions of credibility will be associated with a steeper rise in the frequency of source use, while lower perceptions of credibility will be associated with a lower rise in frequency of source use.
>
> *Hypothesis 6b*: Newcomers' perceptions of formal information source credibility will moderate the frequency of formal information source use such that higher perceptions of credibility will be associated with a lower decline in the frequency of source use, while lower perceptions of credibility will be associated with a steeper decline in frequency of source use.

Ease of access. Over time, I expect that the ease of accessing both formal and informal sources of HR information will increase, as newcomers are socialized into the organization and gain greater access to these information sources. In the case of

formal sources such as HR departments, newcomers may see these are more easily accessible over time as they learn more ways to access these resources and learn who the key "information holders" are (Burt, 1987). In addition, connections with relational others such as coworkers are strong, as they interact with one another on a frequent basis (e.g., Ho & Levesque, 2005). This level of interaction means these individuals are easily accessible as sources of information. While ease of access may initially be lower due to a newcomer's lack of familiarity with their peers, as newcomers build their networks and expand their social support structure (Ashford & Black, 1996; Nelson & Quick, 1991), the perceived ease of accessing their coworkers for information should increase. Similarly, I expect that perceptions of the ease of accessing informal sources of HR information will increase over time as newcomers meet their coworkers and become more comfortable asking them questions.

> *Hypothesis 7:* Newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing both informal and formal sources will increase over time.

Newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing sources of HR information is also expected to moderate overall frequency of both formal and informal source use. Individuals tend to gravitate to sources of information that they find most accessible (e.g., Marshall, West, & Aitkin, 2011), and there is evidence that accessibility of information sources influences information-seeking behavior (Morrison & Vancouver, 2000). Thus, it is likely that perceptions of ease will moderate the frequency with which newcomers utilize information sources.

Hypothesis 8a: Newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing informal information sources will moderate the frequency of informal information source use such that higher perceptions of ease will be associated with a steeper rise in the frequency of source use, while lower perceptions of ease will be associated with a lower rise in frequency of source use.

Hypothesis 8b: Newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing formal information sources will moderate the frequency of formal information source use such that higher perceptions of ease will be associated with a lower decline in the frequency of source use, while lower perceptions of ease will be associated with a steeper decline in frequency of source use.

Predictors of Initial HR Attributions

Prior to examining how HR attributions may vary over time, I first tackle the question of what may inform an individual's initial HR attributions. While there is some speculation about the factors which may influence these perceptions, this question has not yet been subject to empirical examination. Indeed, Nishii and colleagues (2008) noted the need for research examining potential predictors of HR attributions. Thus, this dissertation represents a first attempt at exploring some of the individual-level factors that may inform initial HR attributions. Figure 1 illustrates the expected relationships.

In general, theory suggests that people's perceptions are formed through a combination of past experiences, personality, and other person-related factors; these experiences and individual traits create schemas from which people draw to make sense of new situations (e.g., Weick, 1979). This sense-making process may in turn inform individual perceptions, as people draw from past experiences and personal traits in the sense-making process. Drawing from this logic, I explore the predictive power of three classes of individual-level variables: work-related (e.g., employment status, referral type), person-related (e.g., work experience, gender), and personality-based (e.g., proactive personality, conscientiousness).

Work-related factors. Work-related variables include an individual's employment status (i.e., intern, co-op, full-time employee), history of previous employment with the organization, and whether the individual found out about the position via a personal referral from a family member, friend, or current employee. I expect that individuals who are full-time employees will report more favorable initial HR attributions, as these newcomers may be more strongly attuned to HR practices due to their long-term focus as a full-time employee. Combined with potential organizational impression management (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006) and employment branding (e.g., Cable & Turban, 2003) processes, it follows that newly-minted full-time entrants to the organization may report more favorable initial attributions. Similarly, I anticipate that newcomers who report finding their current position via a personal referral will be more likely to report favorable initial attribution levels. This is based on the idea that individuals are unlikely to recommend organizations who they themselves do not see as a favorable, employee-focused employers. These positive attitudes about

the organization are likely highlighted when the referral is made, thus coloring the newcomer's initial view of the organization. This perspective runs in contrast to other theories about personal referrals, which surmise that such recommendations provide a more realistic view of the organization (e.g., Vecchio, 1995), which in turn has a negative effect on employee perceptions and attitudes.

In contrast, I expect that previous employment with the organization will be associated with less favorable initial HR attributions, as these individuals have been exposed to actual HR practices (Nishii & Wright, 2006), and are no longer as affected by organizational impression management (Avery & McKay, 2006), employment branding (Turban & Cable, 2003), or the honeymoon effect (e.g., Boswell, Boudreau & Tichy, 2005).

> *Hypothesis 9a:* Employment status as a full-time employee and finding a job via personal referral will be associated with higher initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and lower initial Legal and Costs attributions.
>
> *Hypothesis 9b:* Status as a previous employee of the organization will be associated with lower initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and higher initial Legal and Costs attributions.

Person-related factors. Person-related factors include the variables of work experience, school major, and gender. Work experience is expected to influence initial HR attributions in a less favorable manner, as a greater degree of experience is likely associated with a more realistic view of work in general. Individuals with more work

experience have had opportunities to experience HR practices in organizations, and are expected to be less predisposed to organizational impression management tactics or the "honeymoon" effect.

Individuals reporting a school major which has an "employment focus" such as human resources or industrial relations are expected to have more favorable initial HR attributions, as their education has provided them with a unique perspective on the reality of work. In essence, their schooling provides a point of reference which allows them to assess HR practices from a realistic point of view—one which looks at HR practices with an understanding of the constraints and challenges faced by organizations. While it could be argued that these individuals might initially ascribe higher Compulsory attributions due to their understanding of these constraints, I expect that these newcomers will enter the organization with an more idealized view of the organization; despite their knowledge of legal and cost issues faced by organizations, they may still view the organization as having HR practices in place for more voluntary, "want to" reasons.

While gender is included as another person-related factor in this investigation, there is no theoretical basis for expecting a gender difference in initial HR attributions. However, given the importance of gender in other contexts, it is included as a potential control.

> *Hypothesis 10a:* Major in school will be associated with higher initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and lower initial Legal and Costs attributions.

Hypothesis 10b: Amount of work experience will be associated with lower initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and higher initial Legal and Costs attributions.

Personality-related factors. Personality variables under study include proactive personality (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993), as well as personality dimensions subsumed in the Five-Factor Model (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & John, 1992). Nishii and colleagues noted the potential for personality factors to influence HR attributions (Golding & Rorer, 1972, cf. Nishii et al., 2008), and encouraged researchers to explore this empirically. Thus, I undertake a preliminary investigation of the manner in which personality may impact initial HR attributions.

As noted previously, proactive personality is a construct included in the larger framework of proactive behavior (Crant, 2000). A person high in proactive personality is described as someone who "is relatively unconstrained by situational forces, and who effects environmental change" (Crant, 2000, p. 439). The crux of this personality dimension lie in its roots in the interactionist perspective (e.g., Bandura, 1977), in that it holds that individuals are not simply passive experiencers of their environments, but also active participants. As Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer (1999) note, this results in a "complex process whereby individuals select, interpret, and change situations" (p. 417; Terborg, 1981). While the intent here is not to assume that individuals are engaging in a process to change HR attributions, it is possible that individuals high in this trait assess aspects of their environment differently than those who are low in this disposition. Specifically, I expect that proactive personality will be associated with more favorable

initial HR attributions, as these individuals are likely to be more actively attuned to and engaged with organizational practices. This may in turn prompt individuals to pay more attention to messages about HR practices that are communicated by the organization during the recruitment and selection process. Due to the potential influence of organizational impression management tactics and the like, this may prompt those with more proactive personalities to report more favorable initial levels.

The Five-Factor Model (e.g., Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & John, 1992) includes the personality dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability. While not every dimension of this model is expected to associate with initial HR attributions, the full model is included to most fully investigate potential relationships with HR attributions. Of the five factors, conscientiousness is expected to display the strongest association, as individuals high in this trait may be more inclined to see the organization in a positive light (e.g., Burnett, Williamson & Bartol, 2009).

> *Hypothesis 11:* Proactive personality and conscientiousness will be associated with higher initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and lower initial Legal and Costs attributions.

HR Attributions over Time

Thus far, I have explored trends in sources of HR information over time, as well as potential predictors of initial HR information source use and initial HR attributions. Following the model provided in Figure 2, I now turn to a discussion of the proposed

trends in HR attributions over time, as we well as the potential moderating role of HR information sources.

The perspective of espoused versus experienced HR discusses how there may be a marked difference between HR practices as *espoused* and HR practices as *experienced* (Nishii & Wright, 2008). Essentially, this view suggests that while an organization may espouse or present an HR practice in a particular manner, the employee experience of the practice will likely be quite different when actually implemented due to organizational constraints, differences in management style, communication errors, and similar issues. This follows other work which has discussed the difference between HR as a policy and HR as a practice (Wright & Boswell, 2002). While HR practices may be described in policies and organizational guidelines in a certain way, the manner in which they are presented and utilized in practice may differ. While empirical examinations of the potential differences between espoused and experienced HR are limited, early work examining differences between management reports of HR practices and employee experiences of HR practices finds evidence of a disconnect (e.g., Liao, Toya, Lepak & Hong, 2009). For the purposes of the current study, I posit that discrepancies between HR practices as they are presented (e.g., at orientation, during the recruitment process, etc.) and HR practices as they are experienced (e.g., seeing HR practices carried out in real situations) may influence employees' perceptions of these practices, as employees try to reconcile the resulting disconnect.

The perspective of espoused vs. experienced HR is uniquely suited to the current study, as it suggests that while a newcomer may enter an organization with one perception of HR practices (formed from the espoused version), these perceptions may

change as the newcomer comes to experience HR in the organization. Support for the formation of perceptions from an espoused version of HR practices can be drawn from many different theoretical frameworks in the management literature. For instance, the recruitment literature's examination of organizational impression management (OIM) (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006) offers one explanation. Defined as "any action purposely designed and carried out to influence an audience's perceptions of an organization (Elsbach, Sutton & Principe, 1998, p. 68), organization impression management involves the use of a myriad of tactics to influence perceptions of the organization. A framework of OIM tactics offered by Mohamed, Gardner, and Paolillo (1999) describes five types of impression management tactics that might be utilized by organizations. These include direct, assertive tactics such as ingratiation, intimidation, organizational promotion, exemplification, and supplication. While ingratiation, organizational promotion, and exemplification focus on enhancing a firm's overall image and attractiveness through the demonstration of competency or the highlighting of a firm's strengths, intimidation focuses on using power and authority to make an impression, while supplication takes an alternative approach by "communicating dependence or vulnerability" (Avery & McKay, 2006, p. 163).

While each of these five tactics likely plays a role in the formation of newcomers' perceptions of the workplace, I surmise that the tactics of ingratiation, organizational promotion, and exemplification are the primary tactics involved with impressions relating to HR practices. This is mainly due to an organization's desire to "showcase" its HR practices as policies that distinguish it from its competitors; essentially, the organization is attempting to differentiate itself from other organizations

which may be competing for the same talent. Thus, organizational impression management is expected to play a role in the early formation of HR attributions, as the organization is working to create a particular, espoused version of HR which is likely quite positive in nature. This follows from work which has highlighted the propensity for organizations to put their best foot forward and present a favorable image to both potential and new employees (e.g., Van Maanen, 1975).

Research on the employment branding process (e.g., Collins & Han, 2004; Cable & Turban, 2003) is also informative to a discussion of how organizations create an espoused version of HR practices. In its desire to attract a quality applicant pool from which to source employees, organizations are actively involved in branding themselves as employers of choice. One way that they may approach branding is through the HR practices they offer. For instance, they may brand themselves as an employer who values work-life balance, or perhaps an employer who provides above-market pay and benefits. When branding is connected to specific HR practices, this creates an espoused version of HR which may or may not be consistent with an employee's subsequent experience within the actual organization.

Examination of the temporal nature of newcomers' overall perceptions of the organization is also informative to a discussion of changes in HR attributions and the espoused vs. experienced phenomenon. For instance, research on the "honeymoon hangover" effect (e.g., Boswell et al., 2005; Boswell, Shipp, Payne & Culbertson, 2009; Helmreich, Sawin & Carsrud, 1986) suggests that newcomers often have high expectations of their employer upon entry, and these expectations serve to inflate attitudes and perceptions early in the employment relationship. It is suggested that this is

due to the employer's proclivity to provide an overly optimistic view of the organization during the recruitment and organizational entry process (Boswell et al., 2005; Van Maanen, 1975).While this research has focused on newcomers' reactions to general aspects of the organization, this perspective aligns closely with the concept of espoused vs. experienced HR, as it supports the notion that the information supplied to newcomers about HR practices may be tinged with overly positive messages about the organization.

Thus, during the socialization period, I expect that newcomers will begin to attain a more realistic view of the organization as they come to experience the organization themselves. While they may have received a more positive, enhanced portrait of the organization and its practices upon entry due to organizational efforts at impression management (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006; Elsbach et al., 1998) and branding (e.g., Collins & Han, 2004), leading to a "honeymoon period" of positive attributions (e.g., Boswell et al., 2005; Boswell et al., 2009; Helmreich et al., 1986), I expect these perceptions to wane as the disconnect between HR as espoused and HR as experienced becomes apparent.

Indeed, one can think of this early onboarding period as a type of "unrealistic job preview," where individuals are essentially exposed to an enhanced version of HR. Realistic job previews (RJPs) have been described as "the presentation of both favorable and unfavorable job-related information to job candidates" (Phillips, 1998, p. 673. Rynes, 1991), and entail providing newcomers with a realistic view of what it would be like to work at the organization. While this stream of research has been focused on the provision of information relating to the job itself, this concept can be usefully applied to

a discussion of the provision of information relating to organizational policies and practices (e.g., HR practices). For instance, the literature on realistic job previews (e.g., Phillips, 1998; Wanous, 1973) generally finds that RJPs are associated with a reduction in voluntary turnover, as well as an increase in the overall accuracy of job expectations and reactions (Phillips, 1998). This suggests that providing newcomers with accurate information about the job serves to reduce discrepancies once the individual enters the organization, as they have been provided a more accurate, realistic portrait of the organization. This runs in contrast to individuals who receive the more "traditional preview" (Wanous, 1973), which often contains a more idealized version of the organization. Drawing from this logic, I contend that this "traditional" preview of the organization is created via organizational impression management and employment branding processes, and culminates to create an espoused version of HR which is likely inaccurate.

Thus, taking into consideration an employer's desire to portray a favorable image of the organization (Van Maanen, 1975) and utilize tactics which enhance its attractiveness, it follows that the expectations of newcomers are likely to be inflated upon entry into the organization (Wanous, 1992). Because actual experiences are likely to differ from the idealized version presented by the organization, there arises an issue of met expectations. First introduced by Porter & Steers, (1973), the concept of met expectations is described as "the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he expected to encounter" (p. 152). Porter and Steers contend that when expectations are not met, there can be far-reaching implications for employee attitudes and behaviors. Further research of this

phenomenon has revealed support for this pattern of results, finding that unmet expectations do indeed impact job attitudes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment) as well as turnover intentions and actual turnover (e.g., Wanous, Poland, Premack & Davis, 1992).

Given the relationship between unmet expectations and employee attitudes, it follows that unmet expectations may also influence other employee perceptions such as HR attributions. A newcomer who has certain expectations for HR practices which are based on the espoused version of HR that was presented during recruitment and selection may indeed find their expectations unmet once they enter the organization and receive the "experienced" version of actual HR. This may then manifest in their reported HR attributions, as their perceptions turn toward more compulsory, "have to" reasons for HR practices.

Further, because newcomers rely heavily on proximal others for information (Burt, 1987; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), it follows that existing employees who have experienced a disconnect between espoused and experienced HR may influence the HR attributions of newcomers. If experiencing a disconnect has indeed prompted existing employees to adopt more compulsory attributions for HR practices, socialization theory suggests that newcomers may adopt similar attributions based on their use of coworkers as information sources. Indeed, contagion theory (Burt, 1987) supports this contention, as it suggests that attitudes and perceptions may be passed along from one person to another. Applying this theory, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which a newcomer enters a new workgroup and "absorbs" certain HR perceptions from their coworkers via the process of information acquisition. Indeed, it has been noted that newcomers are "particularly susceptible to influence" during transitions such as organizational entry

due to the uncertainty involved with the transition process (Ashforth & Saks, 1996, p. 149).

In conjunction with the literature on contagion (Burt, 1987), research on organizational cynicism also provides support for the idea that interaction with coworkers may influence the HR attributions of newcomers. First introduced by Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998), organizational cynicism is defined as "a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative affect toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect." (p. 345). Empirical research in this area has found that organizational cynicism is has implications for job satisfaction, organizational commitment (Abraham, 2000; Reichers, Wanous & Austin, 1997), and organizational citizen ship behaviors (Abraham, 2000; Andersson & Bateman, 1997).

Some research in the area of cynicism has drawn from theories of psychological contract violation (e.g., Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 1990), suggesting that organizational cynicism results in part from perceived violations of unwritten contracts between the employee and employer (Andersson, 1996). Applying this perspective, it is possible to see how existing employees who have experienced a disconnect between espoused and experienced HR may grow cynical of the organization's intent, as their psychological contract has been violated.

Abraham (2000) cited Dean and colleagues' work on cynicism, noting how individuals holding cynical beliefs may be inclined to express these feelings in overt ways, such as "knowing looks,", "rolling eyes", and "smirks" (Abraham, 2000, p. 270,

citing Dean et al., 1998, p. 5). It is via these overt behaviors that coworkers may be influencing the attributions of newcomers. As newcomers turn to their coworkers for information about the HR practices in their organization, any overly-expressed feelings of cynicism may be demonstrated to the new employee. In effect, such interaction may exacerbate any tendencies toward compulsory attributions, as these airs of cynicism may make newcomers question the organization's motives behind its HR practices. In essence, interaction with coworkers may enhance perceived discrepancies between HR as espoused and HR as experienced.

Simply put, it is possible that newcomers may begin to experience a greater frequency of Compulsory attributions for an HR practice if there is a discrepancy between HR as espoused and HR as experienced. In essence, although the organization may initially invoke more Voluntary "want to" attributions for its HR practices—prompting newcomers to perceive that HR practices are in place because the employer wants to provide these for its employees—I expect that over time newcomers will report less of these Voluntary attributions. Conversely, I anticipate that there will be an increase in newcomers' Compulsory HR attributions, essentially prompting newcomers to increasingly see HR practices as being in place because the employer feels it "has to" provide these practices.

Hypothesis 12a: Over time, Voluntary "Want To" attributions will decrease.

Hypothesis 12b: Over time, Compulsory "Have To" attributions will increase.

Proposed Moderating Effect of Source Use on Compulsory HR Attributions

Frequency. In addition to the main effects proposed above, I also expect that frequency of HR information source use will moderate the change in HR attributions over time (see Figure 1). While I acknowledge that a moderating effect may also be present for Voluntary "Want To" attributions, due to space constraints I focus on Compulsory "Have To" attributions, as these are expected to rise over time—a trend which organizations likely have an interest in mitigating. Although organizations may also wish to reduce any potential decline in Voluntary attributions, I expect that mitigating rising Compulsory attributions are of foremost concern. In terms of potential moderating effects, I expect that use of formal sources (HR department personnel) will lessen the trajectory of Compulsory "Have To" attributions. This rationale is based on increased exposure to formal sources of HR information, which may be associated with organizational impression management (Avery & McKay, 2006) and employment branding (e.g., Turban & Cable, 2003) tactics. Such exposure may lessen the upward trajectory of Compulsory attributions, as newcomers are receiving more information from sources aiming to portray the organization in the most favorable way possible. This exposure may lessen the upward trend in Compulsory attributions, as the receipt of favorable information about the organization may decrease views that the organization has certain HR practices because it "has to" versus "wants to."

> *Hypothesis 13a:* Frequency of formal source use will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory "Have to" attributions such that higher frequency of formal use will

be associated with a lower rise in attributions, while lower frequency of use will be associated with a steeper rise in attributions.

I also expect that informal HR information source use (coworkers) will moderate the change in Compulsory attributions over time. Specifically, I posit that individuals reporting a higher frequency of informal source use will see a steeper rise in Compulsory attributions, as it is more likely that proximal, informal sources will be providing a "real" picture of the organization's practices due to their tenure in the firm. Drawing from the research on organizational cynicism (e.g., Abraham, 2000; Abraham & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998; Reichers et al., 1997) discussed in the preceding section, I anticipate that newcomers who exhibit a more frequent pattern of using coworkers as information sources will experience a steeper trajectory in the slope of their Compulsory HR attributions. This is because, through the process of information acquisition, they have greater exposure to individuals in the organization who have seen HR as "experienced" rather than espoused. In addition to providing an "insiders" view of the organization (Morrison, 1993b), coworkers have a higher likelihood of having experienced psychological contract violations, and may in turn tend to exhibit organizational cynicism via overt behaviors (e.g., Abraham, 2000; Dean et al., 1998).

Hypothesis 13b: Frequency of informal source use will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory "Have to" attributions such that higher frequency of informal use will be associated with a steeper rise in attributions,

while lower frequency of use will be associated with a lower rise in attributions.

Credibility. I also expect that the level of perceived credibility of information sources will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions. This moderating effect is hypothesized for both informal and formal sources of information, although the effect on attributions is expected to be different for each type of source. The overall rationale for this hypothesis originates from the literature on persuasion (e.g., O'Keefe, 1990) and social cognition (e.g., Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Information sources that are perceived as more credible are often more persuasive, suggesting that the more credible the source, the more influence it may have on newcomer attributions (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977). Citing Fiske and Taylor's work, Bowen and Ostroff (2004) support the link between credibility and attributions, noting that "characteristics of the message source are linked to attributions" (p. 209), and point to credibility of the information source as being particularly important (Chaiken, Wood & Eagly, 1996).

In the case of formal sources of HR information, I expect that a higher perceived credibility of these sources will lessen the overall rise in Compulsory attributions. This is posited based on the organization's interest in creating a positive image of the employer (e.g., Van Maanen, 1975) and its potential proclivity toward organizational impression management (Avery &McKay, 2006). Thusly, I propose that newcomers who perceive formal sources of HR information as more credible will exhibit a mitigated rise in Compulsory attributions, as they are likely attending more closely to these persuasive sources of information (e.g., Kerstetter & Cho, 2004),

which may in turn more strongly influence their attributions (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Chaiken et al., 1996, Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

> *Hypothesis 14a:* The perceived credibility of formal sources of HR information will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions such that higher perceived credibility of formal sources will be associated with a lower rise in attributions, while lower perceived credibility will be associated with a steeper rise in attributions.

Conversely, I expect that a higher perceived credibility of informal sources of HR information will enhance the rise in Compulsory attributions. Applying the rationale that sources of information seen as credible are often more persuasive (Dholakia & Sternthal, 1977), and also may have a stronger influence on attributions (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Chaiken et al., 1996, Fiske & Taylor, 1991), I anticipate that a higher perceived credibility of informal sources will be associated with a rise in Compulsory attributions. As stated previously, because the use of coworkers as information sources may expose newcomers to discrepancies in espoused versus experienced HR, a higher perceived credibility of such informal sources should enhance the rise in these attributions.

> *Hypothesis 14b:* The perceived credibility of informal sources of HR information will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions such that higher perceived credibility of informal sources will be

associated with a higher rise in attributions, while lower perceived credibility will be associated with a lower rise in attributions.

It is also worthwhile to examine how the moderating effect of credibility may differ for the two information source types. While I know of no research examining the use of formal and informal sources of HR information, the literature on consumer behavior serves as a useful reference for the study of this phenomenon. For instance, Nolan (1976) found that individuals tend to view formal sources of information as more credible than informal sources. This would suggest that the same pattern may be found in the context of HR information sources. Thus, I expect that the moderating effect of credibility on Compulsory attributions will be stronger for formal than for informal sources of information.

Hypothesis 14c: The moderating effect of perceived credibility of information source on Compulsory attributions will be stronger for formal sources of information than for informal sources of information.

Ease of access. Perceived ease of accessing sources of HR information is also expected to moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions. Because individuals tend to gravitate to sources of information that they find most accessible (e.g., Marshall, West,& Aitkin, 2011), it follows that ease of access should influence attributions, as information sources that are used more frequently would be expected to exert a stronger influence overall. While this moderating effect is hypothesized for both formal and informal sources, I expect that the moderating effect on the trajectory

of attributions will be different for each source type. Specifically, I anticipate that higher perceptions of the ease of accessing formal sources of HR information will be associated with a lower rise in attributions, as greater ease of access to formal sources will expose the newcomer to more of the "espoused" version of HR given the issues of impression management (Avery & McKay, 2006) and the organization's desire to portray a favorable image as employer (Van Maanen, 1975).

> *Hypothesis 15a:* The perceived ease of accessing formal sources of HR information will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions such that higher perceived ease of accessing formal sources will be associated with a lower rise in attributions, while lower perceived ease of accessing formal sources will be associated with a steeper rise in attributions.

In contrast, I expect that a higher perceived ease of assessing informal sources of HR information will be associated with an increase in the rise of Compulsory attributions, as the newcomer will be subjected to the "experienced" version of HR. In addition, this may lead to additional exposure to coworkers who may have reconciled disconnects between espoused and experienced HR themselves, and may have issues with met expectations (Porter & Steers, 1973) and organizational cynicism (e.g., Dean et al., 1998).

> *Hypothesis 15b:* The perceived ease of accessing informal sources of HR information will moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions such that higher

perceived ease of accessing informal sources will be associated with a steeper rise in attributions, while lower perceived ease of accessing formal sources will be associated with a lower rise in attributions.

HR Attributions and Organizational Commitment

Although the central focus of this dissertation revolves around questions relating to predictors of initial HR attributions, trends in HR attributions over time, and potential moderators (e.g., HR information sources) of these trends, the available data also allows for a cursory examination of how individual initial HR attributions may relate to subsequent individual attitudinal outcomes, such as organizational commitment (see Figure 2).

Core research examining the linkage between HR practices and organizational commitment suggests that a relationship between HR practices and commitment exists (e.g., Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg & Kalleberg, 2000), although it has been suggested that this connection is not direct, but instead influenced by other mediating variables. One such potential variable is employee perceptions, which are proposed to influence organizational commitment. Indeed, recent research on the relationship between perceptions of HR practices and organizational commitment has found evidence of significant relationships, finding that perceptions of HR fairness (e.g., Tremblay et al., 2010) and perceptions of HR effectiveness (e.g., Chang, 2005) share positive connections with organizational commitment. This evidence points to the importance of conducting additional research studying the connection between perceptions of HR and

commitment, as this represents an important component of the HR-firm performance relationship.

One HR perception deserving of additional investigation is HR attributions, as these concern an individual's perception of "why" an organization is using certain practices, and taps into perceptions of an organization's underlying motives for practices (Nishii et al, 2008). This is markedly different from perceptions of fairness or effectiveness, which tap into an individual's perceptions of procedural justice, utility, or efficiency. As HR attributions examine perceptions of an organization's motives or reasons behind practices, it follows that their relationship with organizational commitment is important, as negative perceptions of an organization's motives could certainly impact one's overall commitment to the organization. For instance, individuals who perceive that an organization has practices in place simply because they are required (e.g., "Compulsory"), may not infer that the organization cares about its employees, or that it wishes to enact policies that are beneficial to its workforce. Individuals who perceive such non-employee centric motives may feel exhibit lower levels of commitment. Conversely, individuals who attribute an organization's practices as being in place because the employer wants to have them (e.g., "Voluntary) for reasons of employee well-being or "overinvestment" (Tsui et al., 1997), may in turn display higher levels of commitment, as they see the employer as more devoted to its employees via its HR practices. Indeed, the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) suggests that individuals who perceive their employer to be devoted to their well-being may be more likely to reciprocate via enhanced commitment.

Existing research examining the relationship between HR attributions and group-level organizational commitment found evidence that HR attributions focused on employee well-being and service quality enhancement were positively related to group-level commitment, and that attributions centered on employee exploitation and controlling costs were negatively related (Nishii et al., 2008). While this research examined the relationship between HR attributions and group-level organizational commitment, it supports the notion that similar results will be found when examining individual-level commitment.

Hypothesis 16a: Individual-level Voluntary attributions will share a positive association with individual-level organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 16b: Individual-level Compulsory attributions will share a negative association with individual-level organizational commitment.

METHOD

Design and Sample

The current project employs a longitudinal design, and involves collecting data at four points in time over a three-month period. I obtained access to interns, students participating in experience cooperatives (co-ops), and new graduates from a large university located in the Northeastern United States. This large pool of interns, co-ops, and new graduates is an ideal population from which to draw a "newcomer" sample, as it represents a large cohort of individuals entering their organizations for the first time. Upon entry, these individuals only have information about HR practices as espoused,

and their perceptions are not yet fully formed. Following these individuals over time allows the opportunity to not only examine how HR attributions change over time, but also to investigate the factors which may influence initial HR attributions, as well as how formal and informal sources of information may be influencing trends in these attributions.

Procedures

Data collection spanned the first three months of each participant's employment, and involved four survey waves. The complete data collection time-frame is presented in Table 2. In early May, an email invitation was sent by the career services offices of four colleges within the university to students who had accepted either summer internships or cooperative assignments. In addition, survey invitations were distributed to students who were graduating and had accepted full-time positions. Altogether, approximately 4,067 invitations were distributed. In total, 456 individuals agreed to participate in the study, resulting in a response rate of 11.2% for the first survey wave. The initial sample included 380 interns, 51 recent graduates, and 25 students participating in experience cooperatives (co-ops). Participants had an average age of 20.1 years (SD = 3.1), and 62% of respondents were female. The sample was representative of the university in terms of race and ethnicity, with 65% of respondents identifying themselves as White, and 27% identifying as Asian. In terms of class year, 39.8% were juniors, 29.6% were sophomores, 16.6% were freshman, and 13.9% were seniors. Participants came from four colleges within the university, and reported majors in arts, sciences, industrial/labor relations, agriculture, engineering, and business, among others. In addition, 34% of the sample reporting having at least some full-time work

Table 2. Data Collection Timeline

	Time 1 *(Pre-entry)*	**Time 2** *(Initial entry)*	**Time 3** *(45 days after entry)*	**Time 4** *(90 days after entry, end of internship/co-op)*
HR Attributions		X	X	X
Formal Source: Frequency		X	X	X
Informal Source: Frequency		X	X	X
Formal Source: Credibility		X	X	X
Informal Source: Credibility		X	X	X
Formal Source: Ease of Access		X	X	X
Informal Source: Ease of Access		X	X	X
Organizational Commitment			X	
Person-Related:				
Major	X			
Work experience	X			
Gender	X			
Age	X			
Work-Related:				
Employment Status	X			
Previous Employee	X			
Personal Referral	X			
Personality-Related:				
Proactive Personality	X			
Big Five	X			

experience. The focal internships, co-ops, and full-time jobs of participants varied widely, and spanned across a range of industries.

Due to varying position start dates, survey distribution was timed to coincide with each individual's internship/job/co-op start date. While internships lasting less than 90 days were rare (less than 10 students total), survey distribution dates for these students were adjusted accordingly to ensure that surveys were sent at the proper intervals. Similarly, students participating in co-ops starting in the Fall semester received their subsequent surveys beginning with their co-op start date. All surveys were administered electronically using a third-party website (Qualtrics). Participation rates (wave-to-wave) ranged from 72-83%, reflecting attrition rates typical in longitudinal studies. In total, 200 students completed all four waves, resulting in a full participation rate of 43.9%.

To check for potential attrition bias, I used logistic regression to look for differences between participants who completed all four waves of the study and participants who dropped out of the study. As shown in Table 3, with the exception of proactive personality (*Exp (B)* = 2.09, $p < .01$), there were no significant differences across the groups in terms of the major study variables. While the finding for proactive personality suggests that the final sample best reflects perceptions of those with less proactive personalities, this is addressed by using proactive personality as a control in the analyses. As a further check for possible attrition bias, I conducted an additional set of study analyses which used only the 200 students who completed all survey waves. No significant differences were found between the full sample and the restricted sample,

Table 3. Logistic Regression Comparing Participants Completing all Four Waves to Participants Who Left the Study

	B	*SE*	*Exp(B)*
Constant	- 2.12	1.54	0.12
Age	0.01	0.05	1.01
Gender	0.11	0.28	1.12
Work Experience	0.01	0.01	1.01
Major	- 0.14	0.36	0.87
Previous Employee	0.30	0.30	1.35
Initial Well-Being Attributions	- 0.32	0.17	0.73
Initial Trends Attributions	- 0.07	0.19	0.94
Initial Legal Attributions	- 0.05	0.21	0.95
Initial Cost Attributions	0.16	0.21	1.17
Initial Freq. of Informal Source	- 0.11	0.14	0.90
Initial Freq. of Formal Source	- 0.10	0.15	0.91
Proactive Personality	0.74**	0.28	2.09

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

thus the full sample was retained. A table of results for a portion of these additional analyses can be found in the Appendix.

Survey wave 1. During the first survey wave (pre-organizational entry), participants were asked to provide person-related, work-related, and personality-related information. Person-related information included demographics (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, education), as well as information relating to their year in school, college of enrollment, degree major, and amount of previous work experience. Work-related questions asked for information relating to their new positions, including their employment status (e.g., intern, co-op, continuous full/part-time position), whether they had been previously employed by their organization, and whether they had heard about the position via a personal referral (e.g., family member, friend, current employee). Personality-related information included proactive personality, as well as dimensions from the Five-Factor Model of personality—openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability.

Survey waves 2-4. Subsequent survey waves occurred at the time of organizational entry (Wave 2), 45 days after entry (Wave 3), and at the conclusion of the internship, or 90 days after entry (Wave 4). During each of these survey waves, participations completed scales assessing HR attributions, HR information source use frequency, HR information source credibility, and the ease of accessing HR information sources. In addition, participants completed a scale assessing organizational commitment during Wave 3.

Measures

HR attributions. As a first step, it was necessary to determine which HR practices should be assessed in the current study. While there are a myriad of potential practices from which to choose, time and survey space limitations which prevented an exhaustive examination of all HR practices. Given the nature of the sample (e.g., student interns, co-ops, recent graduates), it was logical to first determine the HR practices with which individuals would be most familiar. Consequently, a pilot survey was first administered to an independent student sample. In this survey, students were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with twelve different HR practices. This initial list of practices was drawn from the most highly-cited articles examining HR practices (e.g., Huselid, 1995). Results of the pilot study indicated that student interns and recent graduates had highest awareness of four HR practices: training, benefits, work-life balance initiatives, and career development opportunities.[1] Based on these results, these were the four focal HR practices used in the final surveys.

Individual attributions for HR practices were assessed using an adapted version of Nishii et al.'s (2008) HR attribution scale. This scale assesses the degree to which individuals perceive that an organization uses HR practices due to concern for employee well-being, image/legal concerns, to benchmark or keep up with trends, or to increase productivity. A sample item is "My organization provides the [insert HR practice] that it does because it genuinely cares for the well-being of employees." Participants were asked to respond to each of the six HR attributions items for each of the four HR

[1] Results of the pilot study indicated low awareness of eight HR practices: pay, promotion processes, grievance/dispute resolution procedures, performance management process, employee onboarding processes, recruitment/selection processes, employee participation opportunities, and diversity initiatives.

practices. This resulted in a total of 24 questions assessing HR attributions across the four HR practices.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted using data from Wave 2 to analyze the factor structure of the scale. As shown in Table 4, results of the EFA reflected a six-factor model, with HR attributions loading onto six general categories: trends, legal concerns, well-being, costs, exploitation, and image. A closer examination of the factor loadings revealed that some items were cross-loading across two categories. Specifically, items relating to image and exploitation were displaying non-exclusive loadings. Based on this observation, items relating to image and exploitation were omitted, and data from Wave 3 was used to conduct confirmatory factor analysis using the remaining four factors: well-being, trends, legal, and costs (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003). As shown in Table 5, results of the four-factor model indicated a good fit (Bentler, 1990; Marsh, Balla & McDonald, 1988) ($X^2_{(94)} = 208.87$, RMSR = .05; SRMSR = .05, RMSEA = .08, GFI = .97; CFI = .93), and fit better than the six-factor model ($X^2_{(231):}$ 495.12, RMSR = .05, SRMSR = .05; RMSEA = .08, GFI = .95; CFI = .90). Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, four scales of HR attributions were computed which correspond to the final four HR attribution factors: Well-being, Trends/Benchmarking, Legal, and Costs. Each scale contained four items, and displayed acceptable levels of reliability: Well-being ($\alpha = .86$), Trends ($\alpha = .88$), Legal ($\alpha = .86$), and Costs ($\alpha = .81$).

The final four HR attribution scales were then assessed to determine whether they could be categorized into a broader, theoretically-driven classification theme. Specifically, correlations were examined to determine whether there was evidence to

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis: HR Attributions

	Factor 1	*Factor 2*	*Factor 3*	*Factor 4*	*Factor 5*	*Factor 6*
Training_TRND	**.802**	.069	.068	.237	-.027	.163
Benefits_TRND	**.843**	.212	.134	.065	.049	.102
Work-life_TRND	**.803**	.209	.178	.063	.187	-.025
Career_TRND	**.733**	.174	.292	-.029	.225	.069
Training_LEG	.228	**.775**	-.125	.091	.000	.168
Benefits_LEG	.302	**.734**	.059	.271	-.130	.192
Work-life_LEG	.151	**.751**	.001	.313	.158	.001
Career_LEG	.083	**.760**	.075	.286	.280	-.126
Training_WB	.144	.036	**.831**	-.120	-.154	.204
Benefits_WB	.128	-.016	**.834**	-.016	.045	.158
Work-life_WB	.118	-.051	**.822**	.004	.224	-.001
Career_WB	.190	.054	**.791**	.003	.225	-.006
Training_IMG	**.433**	**.529**	.048	-.140	.303	.187
Benefits_IMG	**.487**	**.444**	.129	-.056	.256	.305
Work-life_IMG	**.480**	.276	.085	.065	**.583**	.116
Career_IMG	**.477**	.336	.185	.067	**.608**	.000
Training_EXP	.172	.095	.150	.063	.141	**.823**
Benefits_EXP	.098	.118	.135	.286	.239	**.709**
Work-life_EXP	.096	-.004	.171	.318	**.624**	.396
Career_EXP	.089	.103	.160	.205	**.643**	.415
Training_COS	.019	.304	-.116	**.650**	-.080	.292
Benefits_COS	.069	.142	-.016	**.807**	-.028	.141
Work-life_COS	.145	.009	-.048	**.776**	.350	.008
Career_COS	.023	.336	.001	**.664**	.228	.019

N = 261 (Wave 3)
TRND = Trends Attribution, LEG = Legal Attribution, WB = Well-Being Attribution, IMG = Image Attribution, EXP = Exploitation Attribution,
COS = Costs Attribution.

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: HR Attributions

	Trends	*Legal*	*Well-Being*	*Costs*
Training_TRND	.78			
Benefits_TRND	.82			
Work-life_TRND	.83			
Career_TRND	.77			
Training_LEG		.70		
Benefits_LEG		.71		
Work-life_LEG		.87		
Career_LEG		.69		
Training_WB			.82	
Benefits_WB			.85	
Work-life_WB			.88	
Career_WB			.81	
Training_COS				.75
Benefits_COS				.76
Work-life_COS				.82
Career_COS				.83

N = 195 (Wave 4)
TRND = Trends Attribution, LEG = Legal Attribution, WB = Well-Being Attribution, COS = Costs Attribution.

support grouping the attributions into the "Compulsory Have To" and "Voluntary Want To" classifications. It was expected that the Legal and Costs attributions would be related, as each of these attributions are associated with an organization's need to adopt HR practices due to factors beyond its control. In essence, HR practices adopted for legal or cost control reasons are seen as necessary and required, and can be seen as compulsory, "have to" attributions. It was also expected that the Well-Being and Trends attributions would share a relationship, as each of these attributions deal with HR practices that are viewed as more voluntary in nature—they are enacted because the employer wishes to have them in place, and thus can be seen as Voluntary, "Want To" attributions.

A review of the intercorrelations between the scales using Wave 4 data supported the above structure, as meaningful associations were found between the Legal and Costs attributions (r = .43, p < .01), as well as the Well-Being and Trends attributions (r = 41, p < .01). These large intercorrelations provide evidence of convergent validity among these pairs of attributions, while the non-significant (and very small) correlations between the Well-Being, Legal (r = - .01, p > .05), and Costs (r = - .02, p > .05) attributions provide evidence of discriminant validity between the Well-Being attribution and the Legal and Costs attributions. Although the Trends attribution shares a moderate correlation with Legal attributions (r = .33, p < .01) and a weak association with Costs (r = .19, p < .01), the correlations are weaker than those found between Trends and Well-Being. It is possible that these smaller correlations exist because Trends attributions might also be seen as something organizations feel compelled to follow due to pressure from competition. However, unlike Legal or

Costs attributions, the penalties associated with not following trends are not as severe, and it could be argued that while some individuals may see the following of trends as compulsory, common logic dictates that following a trend is more a voluntary than compulsory action. Given this rationale, as well as the convergent and discriminant validity evidence, it was decided to group Trends under the "Voluntary Want To" classification.

Frequency of information source use. Items used to assess formal and informal sources of information about HR practices were adapted from a portion of a scale used by Morrison (1993b). The sources assessed included HR department personnel and coworkers. A sample item is "How often have you used HR department personnel to get information about [insert HR practice]?"

The two sources were further divided into two separate factors: formal and informal sources. Formal sources of information included sources originating from the HR itself, and included HR department personnel. Informal sources included coworkers. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to analyze the intended two-factor structure. As shown in Table 6, results of the EFA provided support for the proposed two-factor structure (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003). Based on these initial findings, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As reported in Table 7, results indicated an excellent fit for the two-factor structure (Bentler, 1990; Marsh et al., 1988) ($X^2_{(17)}$: 29.85, RMSR = .06, SRMSR = .03; RMSEA = .06, GFI = .99; CFI = .98), which was a better fit than a one-factor model ($X^2_{(19)}$: 159.63, RMSR = .18, SRMSR = .10; RMSEA = .19, GFI = .91; CFI = .81). Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, two scales assessing the frequency of using formal and informal sources were

Table 6. Exploratory Factor Analysis: HR Information Source

	Factor 1	*Factor 2*
Frequency		
Training: HR	**.73**	-.01
Benefits: HR	**.80**	.28
Work-Life: HR	**.80**	.27
Career: HR	**.70**	.33
Training: Coworkers	.10	**.83**
Benefits: Coworkers	.22	**.83**
Work-Life: Coworkers	.21	**.80**
Career: Coworkers	.26	**.78**
Credibility		
Training: HR	.12	**.74**
Benefits: HR	.33	**.82**
Work-Life: HR	.31	**.74**
Career: HR	.27	**.78**
Training: Coworkers	**.81**	.21
Benefits: Coworkers	**.83**	.28
Work-Life: Coworkers	**.83**	.29
Career: Coworkers	**.84**	.25
Ease of Access		
Training: HR	.16	**.67**
Benefits: HR	.27	**.81**
Work-Life: HR	.26	**.75**
Career: HR	.23	**.78**
Training: Coworkers	**.83**	.20
Benefits: Coworkers	**.86**	.29
Work-Life: Coworkers	**.85**	.26
Career: Coworkers	**.83**	.27

N = 261 (Wave 3)

Table 7. Confirmatory Factor Analysis: HR Information Source

	Formal	*Informal*
Frequency		
Training: HR	.79	
Benefits: HR	.83	
Work-Life: HR	.82	
Career: HR	.78	
Training: Coworkers		.51
Benefits: Coworkers		.77
Work-Life: Coworkers		.82
Career: Coworkers		.72
Credibility		
Training: HR	.76	
Benefits: HR	.84	
Work-Life: HR	.83	
Career: HR	.84	
Training: Coworkers		.62
Benefits: Coworkers		.81
Work-Life: Coworkers		.76
Career: Coworkers		.73
Ease of Access		
Training: HR	.76	
Benefits: HR	.82	
Work-Life: HR	.84	
Career: HR	.78	
Training: Coworkers		.53
Benefits: Coworkers		.84
Work-Life: Coworkers		.80
Career: Coworkers		.76

N = 195 (Wave 4)

computed. Each scale contained four items, and displayed acceptable levels of reliability: Frequency of Formal Sources (α = .86), Frequency of Informal Sources (.80).

Credibility of information source. Items used to assess perceived credibility of formal and informal sources of information about HR practices were adapted from the above scale. The sources assessed included HR department personnel and coworkers. A sample item is "How credible do you see the HR department personnel for getting information about [insert HR practice]?"

Following the same procedure conducted for frequency of source use, the two sources were further divided into formal and informal sources. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to analyze the intended two-factor structure. As shown in Table 6, results of the EFA provided support for the proposed two-factor structure (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003). Based on these initial findings, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As reported in Table 7, results indicated an excellent fit for the two-factor structure (Bentler, 1990; Marsh et al., 1988) ($X^2_{(17)}$: 39.54, RMSR = .05, SRMSR = .03, RMSEA = .07, GFI = .98, CFI = .98), which was a better fit than a one-factor model ($X^2_{(19):}$ 146.42, RMSR = .13, SRMSR = .08, RMSEA = .18, GFI = .93, CFI = .85). Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, two scales assessing the credibility of formal and informal sources were computed. Each scale contained four items, and displayed acceptable levels of reliability: Credibility of Formal Sources (α = .87), Credibility of Informal Sources (.80).

Ease of accessing information source. Items used to assess perceived ease of accessing formal and informal sources of information about HR practices were adapted

from the above scales. The sources assessed included HR department personnel and coworkers. A sample item is "How easy is it to get information about [insert HR practice] from HR department personnel?"

Following the same procedure conducted for frequency of source use and credibility of source, the two sources were further divided into formal and informal sources. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to analyze the intended two-factor structure. As shown in Table 6, results of the EFA provided support for the proposed two-factor structure (Conway & Huffcutt, 2003). Based on these initial findings, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As reported in Table 7, results indicated an excellent fit for the two-factor structure (Bentler, 1990; Marsh et al., 1988) ($X^2_{(17):}$ 45.91, RMSR = .06; SRMSR = .04, RMSEA = .09, GFI = .98, CFI = .96), which was a better fit than a one-factor model ($X^2_{(19):}$ 199.11, RMSR = .16, SRMSR = .10, RMSEA = .22, GFI = .91, CFI = .77). Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, two scales assessing the ease of accessing formal and informal sources were computed. Each scale contained four items, and displayed acceptable levels of reliability: Ease of Accessing Formal Sources (α = .88), Ease of Accessing Informal Sources (.80).

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was assessed using Meyer, Allen & Smith's (1993) six-item commitment scale. A sample item is "this organization deserves my loyalty." The scale displayed acceptable reliability (α = .88).

Personality. Proactive personality was assessed using Bateman & Crant's (1993) 10-item scale. A sample item is "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life." The scale displayed acceptable reliability (α = .85). The Five-Factor

Model of personality was assessed using the 20 item Mini-IPIP scale (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird & Lucas, 2006), which was adapted from Goldberg's (1999) International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) measure. The scale includes four items to assess each of the five personality dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Although the Mini-IPIP assesses neuroticism rather than the newer-term emotional stability, evidence shows that these dimensions are identical, although they are interpreted inversely from one another. In keeping with the recent move towards re-classifying neuroticism as emotional stability, the neuroticism items were recoded to properly reflect emotional stability and its interpretation. Each of the five personality dimensions in the scale exhibited acceptable reliability: Openness to Experience ($\alpha = .71$), Conscientiousness ($\alpha = .70$, Extraversion ($\alpha = .84$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = .75$), and Emotional Stability ($\alpha = .70$).

Work-related factors. Work-related factors included employment status, previous employment with the organization, and whether the job was the result of a personal referral. Employment status (e.g., intern, co-op, full-time employee) was collected by asking participants to indicate their current status by choosing one of those three options. Previous employment with the organization was assessed by asking individuals whether they had worked for the same organization before (Yes/No). Information on personal referrals was collected by asking participants whether they had been referred by a family member, friend, current/past employee of the organization, company website, online job listing, or a career services office.

Person-related factors. Person-related factors included amount of work experience, school major, and gender. Work experience was assessed by asking participants how many months they had worked in full-time, part-time positions (including internships and co-ops). School major was collected by asking participants to indicate their degree major. This information was then dummy-coded by the researcher to indicate whether the individual's major was "employment-focused" (e.g., human resources, industrial/labor relations) or "non- employment-focused" (i.e., finance, engineering, etc.). Gender information was also collected from participants.

Analysis Strategy

Ordinary least squares regression (OLS) was used to test hypotheses examining initial source use, initial HR attributions, and the effect of HR attributions on organizational commitment. For hypotheses examining source use and HR attributions over time, random coefficient modeling (RCM) was utilized. Longitudinal data involves collecting information from the same individuals over time, thus ordinary squares least squares regression is unsuitable for analyzing this type of data, as the nesting of observations within individuals violates the assumption of independent observations. RCM enables researchers to account for the within-person nesting, and allows greater flexibility in modeling longitudinal relationships (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002; Singer & Willett, 2003).

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations are provided in Table 8.

Predictors of Initial HR Information Source Use

Hypotheses 1a through 3 addressed potential work-, person- and personality-related predictors of initial HR information source use. To thoroughly examine the role that the various hypothesized variables played in predicting initial source use, several models were fit for informal and formal sources. Table 9 summarizes the results of each model.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b examined work-related factors. Hypothesis 1a posited that employment status as a full-time employee and finding a job via personal referral would be associated with higher initial informal and formal source use. As indicated in Models 1 and 5, while status as a full-time employee was associated with a higher initial use of both informal ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < .05$) and formal ($\beta = 0.71$, $p < .05$) sources, finding the job via personal referral did not have a significant influence on initial use of either source type. Thus, Hypothesis 1a was partially supported. Hypothesis 1b predicted that status as a previous employee would be associated with a lower initial use of both informal and formal sources. As shown in Models 1 and 5, although the direction of the relationship was in the expected direction, there was no evidence that being a previous employee was associated with a significant decrease in initial source use. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was not supported. In total, work-related factors explained about three percent of the variance in initial informal and formal HR information source use.

Table 8. Descriptives and Intercorrelations

Table 8. Descriptives and Intercorrelations

	N	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Well-Being Attribution	261	3.84	0.77	(.86)							
2. Trends Attribution	261	3.50	0.82	.36**	(.88)						
3. Legal Attribution	261	3.33	0.81	.05	.48**	(.86)					
4. Cost Attribution	261	3.09	0.78	.02	.22**	.47**	(.81)				
5. Formal Source: Frequency	266	2.23	1.11	.17**	.21**	.15*	.08	(.86)			
6. Informal Source: Frequency	266	2.91	1.09	.41**	.25**	.09	.07	.50**	(.80)		
7. Formal Source: Credibility	266	3.32	1.27	.31**	.25**	.16**	.14*	.50**	.28**	(.87)	
8. Informal Source: Credibility	266	3.49	1.05	.45**	.27**	.08	.09	.25**	.58**	.58**	(.80)
9. Formal Source: Ease	266	2.89	1.21	.29**	.25**	.13*	.11	.68**	.33**	.84**	.53**
10. Informal Source: Ease	266	3.38	1.07	.44**	.28**	.09	.08	.32**	.68**	.54**	.85**
11.Organizational Commitment	272	3.33	0.72	.50**	.17**	.05	.07	.21**	.39**	.12	.29**
12. Proactive Personality	454	3.68	0.51	.27**	.20**	-.01	-.11	.18**	.23**	.08	.15*
13. Openness to Experience	451	3.88	0.66	.08	-.02	-.09	-.18**	-.03	.07	-.06	.05
14. Conscientiousness	449	3.62	0.74	.18**	.05	.00	-.06	.19**	.13*	.13*	.09
15. Extraversion	449	3.16	0.91	.11	.04	-.02	-.07	.15*	.15*	.10	.09
16. Agreeableness	450	3.99	0.66	.06	.04	.03	.06	.08	.10	.06	.11
17. Emotional Stability	446	3.37	0.75	.24**	.04	-.07	-.03	-.01	.12	.09	.17**
18. Work Experience in Months	427	11.21	13.33	-.12	-.10	-.01	-.02	.04	.00	-.04	-.09

Note. Scale reliabilities on diagonal.
N = 25 to 456. *p < .05, **p < .01

Table 8. Descriptives and Intercorrelations (cont.)

	N	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19. Personal Referral (1 = Yes)	340	0.48	0.50	-.01	-.08	-.09	-.08	-.11	-.08	.00	-.07
20. Previous Employee of Org. (1 = Yes)	451	0.22	0.42	-.11	-.10	.00	-.02	.04	-.01	-.05	-.11
21. Intern (1=Yes)	380	0.83	0.37	.04	-.13*	-.16*	-.10	-.18**	-.09	-.09	.04
22. Co-op (1 = Yes)	51	0.11	0.32	-.07	.01	.04	.01	.12*	-.01	.04	.00
23. FT Employee (1 = Yes)	25	0.05	0.23	.00	.15*	.16**	.11	.13*	.11	.08	-.04
24. Major (1 = Focus on employment)	456	0.19	0.40	.03	.20**	.05	-.07	.19**	.15*	.11	.04
25. Female (2 = Yes)	449	1.62	0.49	.20**	.05	.04	.10	.02	.14*	.09	.11
26. Age (in years)	443	20.1	3.10	.14*	.12	.01	-.01	.01	.05	.04	.06

Note. Scale reliabilities on diagonal.
N = 25 to 456. *p < .05, **p < .01

Table 8. Descriptives and Intercorrelations (cont.)

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9. Formal Source: Ease	(.88)										
10. Informal Source: Ease	.55**	(.80)									
11. Organizational Commitment	.16**	.32**	(.88)								
12. Prosocial Personality	.13*	.20**	.21**	(.85)							
13. Openness to Experience	-.04	.04	-.07	.30**	(.71)						
14. Conscientiousness	.15*	.11	.02	.12	-.03	(.69)					
15. Extraversion	.14*	.11	.10	.45**	.18**	.04	(.84)				
16. Agreeableness	.06	.14*	.08	.11	.31**	.01	.25**	(.75)			
17. Emotional Stability	.06	.14*	.18**	.08	.04	.16**	-.14**	-.04	(.70)		
18. Work Experience in Months	-.03	.00	.00	.11	.10	.14*	.01	.04	.04	--	
19. Personal Referral (1 = Yes)	.09	-.06	.22**	.08	.00	-.02	.11*	.05	-.01	-.07	--
20. Previous Employee of Org. (1 = Yes)	-.03	-.10	.18**	.06	.02	.01	.00	-.06	-.06	-.06	.44**
21. Intern (1=Yes)	-.08	.03	-.11	-.11	.11*	.04	-.06	.02	-.06	.01	.00
22. Co-op (1 = Yes)	.06	-.03	.04	-.06	-.11*	-.06	-.03	-.01	-.01	.02	-.12*
23. FT Employee (1 = Yes)	.05	-.01	.10	.17**	-.06	-.01	.09*	-.02	.07	-.02	.08
24. Major (1 = Focus on employment)	.12	.04	.08	.13**	-.01	.00	.22**	.06	.02	-.03	-.01
25. Female (2 = Yes)	.07	.14*	.05	.01	.00	.11*	.06	.23**	-.21**	.10*	.01
26. Age (in years)	.01	.07	.08	.00	-.02	.01	-.01	.07	-.04	.12*	.03

Note. Scale reliabilities on diagonal.
N = 25 to 456. *p < .05, **p < .01

Table 8. Descriptives and Intercorrelations (cont.)

	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
20. Previous Employee of Org. (1 = Yes)	--						
21. Intern (1=Yes)	-.18**	--					
22. Co-op (1 = Yes)	.10*	-.54**	--				
23. FT Employee (1 = Yes)	.14**	-.79**	-.09	--			
24. Major (1 = Focus on employment)	.02	-.08	-.05	.13**	--		
25. Female (2 = Yes)	-.05	.12**	-.09	-.08	-.03	--	
26. Age (in years)	.04	-.06	.01	.06	-.09	.07	--

Note. Scale reliabilities on diagonal.
N = 25 to 456.
**p* < .05, ***p* < .01

Table 9. Regressions Examining Predictors of Initial HR Information Source Frequency

	Informal Sources				Formal Sources			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Constant	2.70***	2.29***	0.52	0.45	2.03***	1.87***	- 0.32	- 0.66
Coop	0.54	0.44	0.46	0.44	0.34	- 0.14	- 0.12	- 0.16
FT Employee	0.62*	0.58†	0.53†	0.46	0.71*	0.64*	0.57†	0.43
Previous Employee	- 0.06	0.01	0.03	0.01	- 0.19	- 0.14	- 0.12	- 0.15
Personal Referral	0.16	0.13	0.10	0.04	0.20	0.19	0.14	0.10
Work Exp. (months)		0.01	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00
Major		0.38*	0.33†	0.30†		0.65***	0.57***	0.61***
Gender		0.15	0.23	0.19		0.03	0.07	0.05
Proactive Personality			0.46***	0.30*			0.58***	0.50***
Openness to Experience				0.01				- 0.05
Conscientiousness				0.05				0.32**
Emotional Stability				0.01				- 0.05
Agreeableness				0.00				- 0.08
Extraversion				0.15†				0.06
R^2	0.03	0.07	0.12	0.12	0.03	0.09	0.17	0.18
ΔR^2		0.04	0.05	0.00		0.06	0.08	0.01

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported.
N = 327.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Hypotheses 2a and 2b examined the effect of person-related factors while controlling for work-related factors. Hypothesis 2a predicted that the person-related factors of work experience and gender would be associated with high initial informal and formal source use. As shown in Models 2 and 6 of Table 9, neither work experience nor gender shared a significant association with initial source use. Hypothesis 2b posited that school major would be associated with higher initial formal source use. As shown in Model 2, school major was associated with a higher initial use of formal sources ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < .001$), indicating support for Hypothesis 2b. Interestingly, as shown in Model 2, school major was also associated with a higher initial use of informal sources ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .05$), although the strength of this relationship was weaker than that found for formal sources. The addition of these person-related factors to the overall regression model resulted in an increase in the amount of variance explained for both informal ($\Delta R^2 = 0.04$) and formal ($\Delta R^2 = 0.06$) sources.

Hypothesis 3 explored the effect of personality-related factors while controlling for work- and person-related variables. This hypothesis predicted that proactive personality and conscientiousness would be associated with a higher initial use of formal and informal sources. Due to evidence in the literature that proactive personality may play a significant role in general information source use (e.g., Crant, 2000), this variable was examined on its own while controlling for work- and person-related factors. As shown in Models 3 and 7 in Table 9, proactive personality shared a significant, positive association with initial use of both informal ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < .001$) and formal ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < .001$) sources. Personality dimensions from the Five Factor

Model were then added to examine the influence of conscientiousness. As shown in Models 4 and 8, while conscientiousness is not associated with an increased initial use of informal sources, it is associated with a higher initial use of formal sources (β = 0.32, $p < .01$), even while controlling for proactive personality. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. The addition of these personality-related factors to the overall regression model resulted in an increase in the amount of variance explained for both informal ($\Delta R^2 = 0.07$) and formal ($\Delta R^2 = 0.09$) sources.

Models 4 and 8 of Table 9 allow the most complete picture of how work-, person-, and personality-related factors may influence initial HR information source use. For instance, while the work-related factor of full-time employee status was associated with higher initial informal and formal source use, this effect was no longer significant when all personality-related factors were included in the regression model. Similarly, while school major was significantly associated with a higher initial use of informal sources, the significance level became marginal once personality was included. However, this was not the case for formal sources; even when personality was taken into account, school major remained highly significant. Altogether, it appears that while proactive personality is the most predictive factor for informal source use, school major, proactive personality, and conscientiousness are all important predictors of initial formal source use.

Sources of HR Information over Time

Hypotheses 4a and 4b examined changes in the frequency of HR information source use of time. Hypothesis 4a predicted that newcomers' frequency of informal source use would increase over time. As shown in Model 4 of Table 10, even while

Table 10. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Information Source Frequency over Time

	Informal Sources				Formal Sources			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Intercept	2.75***	2.24***	0.55	0.06	2.03***	1.96***	- 0.20	- 1.07†
Time	0.10*	0.14***	0.15***	0.12**	0.14***	0.16***	0.17***	0.14***
Coop	0.52			0.38	0.49			- 0.02
FT Employee	0.55*			0.34	0.59*			0.32
Previous Employee	- 0.11			- 0.04	- 0.17			- 0.08
Personal Referral	0.14			0.07	0.19			0.12
Work Exp. (months)		0.00		0.00		- 0.01*		- 0.01
Major		0.44**		0.32*		0.67***		0.57***
Gender		0.25*		0.24*		0.02		0.08
Proactive Personality			0.48***	0.48***			0.41***	0.51***
Conscientiousness			0.11	0.11			0.19**	0.29***

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

controlling for work-, person-, and personality-related factors, there is evidence of a significant increase in informal source use over time ($b = 0.21$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 4b predicted that newcomers' frequency of formal source use would decrease over time. Unexpectedly, as shown in Model 8, there was actually evidence of an increase in formal source over time ($b = 0.14$, $p < .001$). Thus, while Hypothesis 4a was supported, Hypothesis 4b was not supported.

Hypothesis 5 examined changes in perceptions of credibility of HR information sources over time, predicting that newcomers' perceptions of the credibility of both informal and formal sources would increase over time. As shown in Models 4 and 8 of Table 11, while controlling for work-, person-, and personality-related factors, there was no evidence of a significant increase in the credibility of informal or formal sources over time. Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Hypotheses 6a and 6b investigated the role that credibility may play in moderating frequency of HR information source use over time. Hypothesis 6a predicted that newcomers' perceptions of informal source credibility would moderate the frequency of information source use such that higher perceptions of credibility would be associated with a steeper rise in frequency of source use, while lower perceptions of credibility would be associated with a lower rise in frequency. Contrary to predictions, no support was found for Hypothesis 6a. Hypothesis 6b posited that newcomers' perceptions of credibility would moderate the frequency of information source use such that higher perceptions of credibility would be associated with a lessening of the decline in source use, while lower perceptions of credibility would be associated with a steeper decline in frequency of source use. Because there was no

Table 11. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Information Source Credibility over Time

	Informal Sources				Formal Sources			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Intercept	3.49***	3.02***	2.10***	1.53**	3.24***	2.90***	1.65**	0.82
Time	0.03	0.06†	0.07*	0.03	0.08†	0.12**	0.13**	0.08
Coop	0.36			0.04	0.12			- 0.50
FT Employee	0.03			- 0.09	0.36			0.24
Previous Employee	- 0.26†			- 0.20	- 0.18			- 0.14
Personal Referral	0.09			0.06	0.08			0.07
Work Exp. (months)		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00
Major		0.24†		0.27†		0.40*		0.41*
Gender		0.22*		0.30*		0.12		0.22
Proactive Personality			0.25**	0.30**			0.21†	0.32*
Conscientiousness			0.10	0.09			0.20*	0.21*

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

evidence of a decline in formal source frequency, Hypothesis 6b was eliminated from the analysis.

Hypothesis 7 examined change in the ease of accessing sources of HR information, predicting that newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing both informal and formal sources would increase over time. As shown in Model 4 of Table 12, while controlling for work-, person-, and personality-related factors, there was no evidence of a significant increase in the ease of accessing informal sources over time. However, as reported in Model 8, there was evidence of an increase in perceptions of the ease of accessing formal sources over time ($b = 0.10$, $p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 7 was partially supported.

Hypotheses 8a and 8b examined how ease of access may moderate the frequency of HR information source use over time. Hypothesis 8a predicted that newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing informal sources would moderate the frequency of information source use such that higher perceptions ease would be associated with a steeper rise in frequency of source use, while lower perceptions of ease would be associated with a lower rise in frequency. Contrary to predictions, no support was found for Hypothesis 8a. Hypothesis 8b posited that newcomers' perceptions of the ease of accessing formal information sources would moderate the frequency of information source use such that higher perceptions of ease would be associated with a lessening of the decline in source use, while lower perceptions of ease would be associated with a steeper decline in frequency of source use. Because there was no evidence of a decline in formal source frequency, Hypothesis 8b was eliminated from the analysis.

Table 12. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Information Source Ease of Access over Time

	Informal Sources				Formal Sources			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Intercept	2.75***	2.48***	1.00*	- 0.04	3.31***	2.77***	1.50***	0.98†
Time	0.07	0.11**	0.12**	0.07	0.08†	0.12**	0.13***	0.10*
Coop	0.44			- 0.18	0.26			- 0.02
FT Employee	0.38			0.17	0.19			0.05
Previous Employee	- 0.21			- 0.17	- 0.24			- 0.19
Personal Referral	0.22			0.23	0.10			0.06
Work Exp. (months)		0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00
Major		0.48**		0.44*		0.26†		0.21
Gender		0.12		0.18		0.26*		0.26*
Proactive Personality			0.27*	0.41**			0.33***	0.39***
Conscientiousness			0.19*	0.25*			0.13†	0.16

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Predictors of Initial HR Attributions

Hypotheses 9a through 11 addressed potential work-, person- and personality-related predictors of initial HR attributions. To thoroughly examine the role that the various hypothesized variables played in predicting initial HR attributions, several models were fit for each HR attribution category. Table 13 summarizes the results of each model.

Hypotheses 9a and 9b examined work-related factors. Hypothesis 9a posited that employment status as a full-time employee and finding a job via personal referral would be associated with higher initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and lower initial Legal and Costs attributions. Contrary to expectations, there was no evidence of full-time status being associated with higher initial Well-Being or Trends attributions. Similarly, there was no evidence of full-time status sharing a negative relationship with initial Legal or Costs attributions. Rather, as indicated in Model 7 of Table 13, status as a full-time employee was associated with *higher* initial Legal attributions ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < .05$). While there was some marginal evidence that personal referrals may enhance initial Well-Being attributions (Model 1, $\beta = 0.19$, $p < .10$) referrals did not influence initial attributions for Trends, Legal, or Costs in the expected direction. Thus, Hypothesis 9a was only partially supported. Hypothesis 9b predicted that status as a previous employee of the organization would be associated with lower initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and higher initial Legal and Costs attributions. As shown in Model 1 of Table 13, status as a previous employee was marginally associated with lower initial Well-Being attributions ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < .10$), but did not have a significant effect on Trends, Legal, or Costs

Table 13. Regressions Examining Predictors of Initial HR Attributions

	Well-Being			Trends			Legal			Costs		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Constant	3.80***	3.72***	2.02**	3.27***	3.49***	2.92***	3.14***	3.25***	3.77***	2.96***	2.95***	3.35***
Coop	- 0.08	0.16	0.22	0.30	- 0.04	- 0.07	- 0.04	0.04	- 0.05	0.19	0.16	0.14
FT Employee	- 0.02	0.00	- 0.14	0.14	0.12	- 0.5	0.53*	0.67**	0.58*	0.23	0.31	0.17
Previous Employee	- 0.26†	- 0.30*	- 0.27†	0.02	0.08	0.10	0.02	0.08	0.10	- 0.10	- 0.07	- 0.08
Personal Referral	0.19†	0.20	0.14	0.18	0.16	0.07	0.08	0.02	- 0.03	0.08	0.03	0.02
Work Exp. (months)		0.01	0.01		0.00	0.00		- 0.01†	- 0.01†		- 0.01†	- 0.01
Major		0.26†	0.22		0.33*	0.25†		- 0.11	- 0.12		- 0.20	- 0.14
Gender		- 0.02	0.01		- 0.21†	- 0.20		- 0.01	- 0.05		0.07	0.06
Proactive Personality			0.21†			0.27*			0.09			0.08
Openness to Experience			0.00			- 0.25*			- 0.17†			- 0.14
Conscientiousness			0.12			0.14			0.15†			0.07
Emotional Stability			0.14†			- 0.05			- 0.18*			- 0.10
Agreeableness			- 0.07			- 0.05			- 0.02			- 0.03
Extraversion			0.07			0.13†			0.01			0.01
R^2	0.02	0.05	0.13	0.02	0.05	0.13	0.03	0.06	0.10	0.01	0.04	0.05
ΔR^2		0.03	0.08		0.03	0.08		0.03	0.04		0.03	0.01

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported.
N = 327.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

attributions. Thus, Hypothesis 9b received only partial support. In total, work-related factors explained only one to three percent of the variance in initial HR attributions.

Hypotheses 10a and 10b examined the effect of person-related factors while controlling for work-related factors. Hypothesis 10a predicted that school major would be associated with high Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and lower initial Legal and Costs attributions. As shown in Models 2 and 5 of Table 13, school major was associated with higher initial Well-Being (β = 0.26, p < .10) and Trends (β = 0.33, p < .05) attributions as expected. However, while the direction of the relationship between school major and the Legal and Costs attributions was negative as expected, these relationships were not statistically significant. Thus, Hypothesis 10a was only partially supported. Hypothesis 10b posited that amount of work experience would be associated with lower initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and higher initial Legal and Costs attributions. While there was some very marginal evidence that work experience shares a negative relationship with Legal (β = - 0.01, p < .10) and Costs attributions (β = - 0.01, p < .10), no significant relationship was found between work experience and the Well-Being or Trends attributions. Given the marginal level of statistical significance available, there is not enough evidence to support Hypothesis 10b. Overall, the addition of these person-related factors to the regression model resulted in an increase in the amount of variance explained for each of the attribution categories: Well-Being (ΔR^2 = 0.03), Trends (ΔR^2 = 0.03), Legal (ΔR^2 = 0.03), and Costs (ΔR^2 = 0.03).

Hypothesis 11 explored the effect of personality-related factors while controlling for work- and person-related variables, predicting that proactive

personality and conscientiousness would be associated with a higher initial Employee Well-Being and Trends attributions, and lower initial Legal and Costs attributions. As shown in Models 3 and 6 in Table 13, proactive personality shared a significant, positive association with initial Well-Being (β = 0.21, p < .10) and Trends (β = 0.27, p < .05) attributions. Contrary to expectations, there was no evidence that proactive personality influenced Legal or Cost attributions. Similarly, although conscientiousness shared a marginally significant relationship with Legal attributions (β = 0.15, p < .10), there was no evidence that this personality dimension plays a role in initial HR attributions. Rather, it appears that openness to experience and emotional stability are stronger predictors, as openness shared a negative relationship with Trends attributions (β = - 0.25, p < .05), and emotional stability demonstrated a negative relationship with Legal attributions (β = - 0.18, p < .05). Possible explanation for these unexpected findings are discussed later. Based on these findings, Hypothesis 11 was only partially supported. The addition of these personality-related factors to the overall regression model resulted in an increase in the amount of variance explained for each of the attribution categories: Well-Being (ΔR^2 = 0.08), Trends (ΔR^2 = 0.08), Legal (ΔR^2 = 0.04), and Costs (ΔR^2 = 0.01).

HR Attributions over Time

Hypotheses 12a and 12b investigated how HR attributions change over time. Hypothesis 12a predicted that Voluntary "Want To" HR attributions would decrease over time. Results are summarized in Table 14. As shown in Model 4, there was no evidence of a significant change in Well-Being attributions over time. In fact, the coefficient (b = - 0.01, *n.s.*) depicts the absence of any change over time. In effect,

Table 14. Random Coeffcient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time

Table 14. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time

	Well-Being				Trends			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Intercept	3.82***	3.46***	1.67***	1.52**	3.36***	3.19***	2.18***	2.47***
Time	0.00	0.01	0.01	- 0.01	0.15***	0.15***	0.16***	0.17***
Coop	- 0.03			0.14	0.36			0.08
FT Employee	0.02			- 0.16	0.29†			0.08
Previous Employee	- 0.25*			- 0.22†	- 0.08			0.00
Personal Referral	0.15			0.09	0.04			- 0.06
Work Exp. (months)		0.00		0.01		0.00		0.00
Major		0.18†		0.16		0.49***		0.31*
Gender		0.17†		0.19†		0.03		- 0.01
Proactive Personality			0.29***	0.24*			0.33***	0.34**
Openness to Experience			- 0.03	0.01			- 0.18**	- 0.21*
Conscientiousness			0.10†	0.13†			0.06	0.10
Emotional Stability			0.18***	0.18**			0.02	- 0.01
Agreeableness			0.05	- 0.05			0.05	0.00
Extraversion			- 0.01	0.02			0.04	0.05

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 14. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time (cont.)

	Legal				Costs			
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16
Intercept	3.23***	3.09***	3.54***	3.96***	3.00***	2.73***	3.35***	3.80***
Time	0.10**	0.11***	0.12***	0.11***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***
Coop	- 0.02			- 0.16	0.13			0.04
FT Employee	0.39*			0.40*	0.24			0.22
Previous Employee	0.09			0.15	- 0.02			0.02
Personal Referral	- 0.07			- 0.17	- 0.01			- 0.08
Work Exp. (months)		- 0.01*		- 0.01**		0.00		- 0.01*
Major		0.08		0.04		- 0.13		- 0.15
Gender		0.10		0.07		0.20*		0.14
Proactive Personality			0.02	0.09			0.03	0.06
Openness to Experience			- 0.11	- 0.24**			- 0.16*	- 0.22**
Conscientiousness			0.07	0.11			0.02	- 0.01
Emotional Stability			- 0.10†	- 0.14*			- 0.06	- 0.05
Agreeableness			0.03	0.01			0.10	0.00
Extraversion			- 0.03	- 0.03			- 0.03	- 0.02

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Well-Being attributions appear to remain stagnant in the first three months of employment. Further, as shown in Model 8, even after controlling for work-, person-, and personality-related factors, there is evidence that Trends attributions actually increase over time (b = 0.17, p < .001). Based on these results, Hypothesis 12a was not supported. Hypothesis 12b predicted that Compulsory "Have To" HR attributions would increase over time. As shown in Models 12 and 16 of Table 14, there is evidence that Legal (b = 0.11, p < .001) and Costs (b = 0.10, p < .001) attributions increase over time. Thus, Hypothesis 12b was fully supported.

Moderating Effect of Information Source on Compulsory HR Attributions

Hypotheses 13a through 15b investigated how HR information source frequency, credibility, and ease of access may moderate the trend in Compulsory HR attributions over time. Hypothesis 13a predicted that frequency of formal source use would moderate the effect of time on Compulsory "Have to" attributions such that higher frequency of formal use would be associated with a lower rise in attributions, while lower frequency of use would be associated with a higher rise in attributions. As shown in Model 1 of Table 15, there was evidence of a moderating effect in the expected direction, with frequency of formal source use moderating the Legal attribution (b = - 0.06, p < .05). No moderating effect was found for the Costs attribution. Thus, Hypothesis 13a was partially supported.

Hypothesis 13b posited that frequency of informal source use would moderate the effect of time on Compulsory "Have To" attributions such that a higher frequency of informal source use would be associated with a higher rise in attributions, while a

Table 15. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time, Moderated by Information Source Frequency

	Legal		Costs	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	3.87***	3.86***	3.76***	3.76***
Time	0.23**	0.21*	0.18**	0.15
Time*Freq. Formal Source	- 0.06*		- 0.04	
Freq. Formal Source	0.14		0.08	
Time*Freq. Informal Source		- 0.04		- 0.02
Freq. Informal Source		0.10*		0.04
Coop	- 0.15	- 0.18	0.04	0.03
FT Employee	0.38*	0.38*	0.21	0.21
Previous Employee	0.16	0.15	0.03	0.02
Personal Referral	- 0.17†	- 0.17†	- 0.09	- 0.09
Work Exp. (months)	- 0.01**	- 0.01**	- 0.01*	- 0.01*
Major	- 0.01	0.03	- 0.18	- 0.16
Gender	0.07	0.05	0.14	0.14
Proactive Personality	0.05	0.06	0.03	0.05
Openness to Experience	- 0.22**	- 0.24**	- 0.21**	- 0.22**
Conscientiousness	0.08	0.10	- 0.02	- 0.01
Emotional Stability	- 0.13*	- 0.15*	- 0.04	- 0.05
Agreeableness	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
Extraversion	- 0.03	- 0.04	- 0.02	- 0.02

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

lower frequency of informal source use would be associated with a lower rise in attributions. Results indicated no evidence that informal source use moderated either the Legal or Costs attributions, therefore Hypothesis 13b was not supported. Hypothesis 14a predicted that the perceived credibility of formal sources of HR information would moderate the effect of time on Compulsory "Have To" attributions such that higher perceived credibility would be associated be a lower rise in attributions. As shown in Model 1 of Table 16, there is evidence that perceived credibility of formal sources of information moderates the effect of time on the Legal attribution (b = - 0.06, p < .01). No effect was found for the Costs attribution. Based on this evidence, Hypothesis 14a received partial support.

Hypothesis 14b posited that the perceived credibility if informal sources of HR information would moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions such that higher perceived credibility of informal sources would be associated with a higher rise in attributions, while lower perceived credibility would be associated with a lower rise in attributions. Contrary to expectations, no significant moderating effect was found, thus Hypothesis 14b received no support. Hypothesis 14c predicted that the moderating effect of perceived credibility would be stronger for formal than informal sources. Because the only significant moderating effect found was for the perceived credibility of formal sources, this hypothesis may be partially supported. However, future research is required to more fully investigate this proposition.

Hypothesis 15a predicted that ease of accessing formal sources of HR information would moderate the effect of time on Compulsory attributions such that higher perceived ease of accessing formal sources would be associated with a lower

Table 16. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time, Moderated by Information Source Credibility

	Legal		Costs	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	3.72***	3.76***	3.70***	3.67***
Time	0.31**	0.29*	0.19*	0.20†
Time*Cred. Formal Source	- 0.06*		- 0.03	
Cred. Formal Source	0.12***		0.06†	
Time*Cred. Informal Source		- 0.05		- 0.03
Cred. Informal Source		0.07		0.05
Coop	- 0.13	- 0.16	0.05	0.03
FT Employee	0.40*	0.40*	0.22	0.23
Previous Employee	0.16	0.15	0.03	0.03
Personal Referral	- 0.18†	- 0.17	- 0.09	- 0.09
Work Exp. (months)	- 0.01*	- 0.01**	- 0.01	- 0.01*
Major	0.02	0.04	- 0.16	- 0.16
Gender	0.07	0.07	0.14	0.14
Proactive Personality	0.06	0.08	0.04	0.05
Openness to Experience	- 0.21**	- 0.23**	- 0.21**	- 0.22**
Conscientiousness	0.10	0.11	- 0.01	- 0.01
Emotional Stability	- 0.14*	- 0.14*	- 0.05	- 0.05
Agreeableness	- 0.01	0.01	- 0.01	0.00
Extraversion	- 0.03	- 0.03	- 0.02	- 0.02

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

rise in attributions, while lower perceived ease of access would be associated with a higher rise in attributions. As shown in Model 1 of Table 17, there is evidence that perceived ease of accessing formal sources of information moderates the effect of time on the Legal attribution (b = - 0.07, p < .05), however no effect was found for the Costs attribution. Based on this evidence, Hypothesis 15a received partial support.

Hypothesis 15b posited that the perceived ease of accessing informal sources of HR information would moderate the effect on time on Compulsory attributions such that higher perceived ease of accessing informal sources would be associated with a higher rise in attributions, while lower perceived ease of access would be associated with a lower rise. As shown in Model 2 of Table 17, there is marginal evidence that perceived ease of accessing informal sources of information moderates the effect of time on the Legal attribution (b = - 0.06, p < .10). No effect was found for the Costs attribution. Based on this evidence, Hypothesis 15b received partial support.

HR Attributions and Organizational Commitment

Hypotheses 16a and 16b explored how HR attributions may influence organizational commitment. Hypothesis 16a predicted that individual-level Voluntary HR attributions would share a positive association with individual-level organizational commitment. As shown in Models 5 and 7 of Table 18, a positive association was found between organizational commitment and the Well-Being (β = 0.41, p < .001) and Trends (β = 0.13, p < .10) attributions. Thus, Hypothesis 16a was supported.

Hypothesis 16b predicted that individual-level Compulsory HR attributions would share a negative association with individual-level organizational commitment.

Table 17. Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time, Moderated by Information Source Ease of Access

	Legal		Costs	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	3.79***	3.77***	3.76***	3.72***
Time	0.30***	0.33**	0.14	0.21†
Time*Ease Formal Source	- 0.07*		- 0.02	
Ease Formal Source	0.10**		0.06†	
Time*Ease Informal Source		- 0.06†		- 0.03
Ease Informal Source		0.04		0.02
Coop	- 0.16	- 0.17	0.04	0.03
FT Employee	0.40*	0.39*	0.22	0.22
Previous Employee	0.16	0.15	0.03	0.02
Personal Referral	- 0.18†	- 0.18†	- 0.10	- 0.09
Work Exp. (months)	- 0.01**	- 0.01**	- 0.01*	- 0.01*
Major	0.02	0.04	- 0.17	- 0.15
Gender	0.07	0.07	0.14	0.14
Proactive Personality	0.07	0.10	0.04	0.06
Openness to Experience	- 0.22**	- 0.23**	- 0.22**	- 0.23**
Conscientiousness	0.10	0.11	- 0.02	- 0.01
Emotional Stability	- 0.14*	0.14*	- 0.05	- 0.05
Agreeableness	0.01	0.01	- 0.01	0.00
Extraversion	- 0.03	- 0.03	- 0.02	- 0.02

N = 1255 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 18. Regressions Examining the Effect of HR Attributions as a Predictor of Organizational Commitment

Table 18. Regressions Examining Effect of HR Attributions as a Predictor of Organizational Commitment

				Well-Being		Trends	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Constant	3.12***	2.96***	1.33*	0.83	1.09*	1.52*	1.46*
Coop	0.28	0.11	0.34	0.20	0.29	0.30	0.27
FT Employee	0.20	0.16	0.05	- 0.13	0.04	- 0.17	- 0.18
Previous Employee	0.23†	0.24†	0.32*	0.34*	0.40**	0.29	0.31*
Personal Referral	0.20†	0.19	0.14	0.14	0.12	0.16	0.17
Work Exp. (months)		0.00	- 0.01	- 0.01	- 0.01	0.00	0.00
Major		0.14	0.11	0.04	0.13	0.09	0.11
Gender		0.11	0.17	0.13	- 0.04	0.16	0.12
Proactive Personality			0.28*	0.22†	0.10	0.29*	0.25*
Openness to Experience			- 0.06	- 0.04	- 0.06	- 0.04	- 0.05
Conscientiousness			- 0.03	- 0.07	- 0.09	- 0.04	- 0.03
Emotional Stability			0.21**	0.13†	0.08	0.20*	0.18*
Agreeableness			0.08	0.11	0.11	0.08	0.07
Extraversion			- 0.06	- 0.09	- 0.06	- 0.06	- 0.05
Well-Being T2				0.29***	0.06		
Well-Being T3					0.41***		
Trends T2						- 0.06	- 0.11
Trends T3							0.13†
Legal T2							
Legal T3							
Costs T2							
Costs T3							
R^2	0.08	0.09	0.17	0.25	0.34	0.16	0.17
ΔR^2		0.01	0.08	0.08	0.09	- 0.01	0.01

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported.
N = 272
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 18. Regressions Examining Effect of HR Attributions as a Predictor of Organizational Commitment (cont.)

	Legal		Costs		All	
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13
Constant	1.31*	1.33†	0.96	0.92	0.79	0.64
Coop	0.31	0.30	0.30	0.29	0.16	0.24
FT Employee	- 0.18	- 0.17	- 0.20	- 0.20	- 0.18	- 0.05
Previous Employee	0.28*	0.29*	0.29*	0.29*	0.37**	0.41**
Personal Referral	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.14	0.15
Work Exp. (months)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Major	0.08	0.11	0.09	0.13	0.09	0.17
Gender	0.17	0.15	0.17	0.14	0.10	- 0.07
Proactive Personality	0.28*	0.28	0.28*	0.28*	0.25*	0.13
Openness to Experience	- 0.02	- 0.04	0.00	- 0.01	- 0.04	- 0.04
Conscientiousness	- 0.05	- 0.05	- 0.05	- 0.05	- 0.07	- 0.10
Emotional Stability	0.20*	0.19*	0.21**	0.20*	0.14†	0.09
Agreeableness	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.09
Extraversion	- 0.07	- 0.07	- 0.07	- 0.08	- 0.09	- 0.05
Well-Being T2					0.31***	0.10
Well-Being T3						0.41***
Trends T2					- 0.45†	- 0.14†
Trends T3						- 0.02
Legal T2	0.01	- 0.01			0.04	0.04
Legal T3		0.04				0.08
Costs T2			0.09	0.05	0.08	0.08
Costs T3				0.07		0.02
R^2	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.16	0.27	0.37
ΔR^2	- 0.02	0.00	- 0.01	0.00	0.10	0.10

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported.
$N = 272$
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Contrary to expectations, no significant association was found between the Legal or Costs attributions and organizational commitment. Model 13 in Table 18 provides a full model, which includes all four of the HR attribution categories. As indicated by the results, the Well-Being attribution appears to bear the strongest association with organizational commitment. Even while controlling for the other attributions, as well as work-, person- and personality-related factors, this attribution shares a positive relationship with commitment.

As noted previously, to check for potential attrition bias all study models were also analyzed using only the 200 participants who completed all four survey waves. Altogether, these analyses showed no significant differences between results obtained using the full versus restricted sample. For comparative purposes, a table of results for the RCM analyses using the restricted sample (for HR attributions over time) is provided in the Appendix.

DISCUSSION

Overall, this study makes several contributions to both the HR attribution and socialization literatures. First, it contributes to HR attribution research by providing the first known examination of potential HR attribution predictors, as well as trends in these perceptions over time. Second, it contributes to the socialization literature by helping us to better understand the socialization process as it applies to learning about an organization's HR policies and procedures. Third, it integrates the socialization and HR attribution literatures by applying socialization theory to examine how interaction with informal sources of HR information influences trends in HR attributions over time.

Predictors of HR Attributions and Trends over Time

The first way this study adds to our understanding of the HR attributions literature is through its exploration of how various work-, person-, and personality-related factors may be associated with initial HR attributions. While many of the findings were inconsistent with the original hypotheses, this work remains informative, as it provides a first look at how various factors may predict initial HR attributions, and acts as a reference point for future work in this area. For instance, although it was expected that the work-related predictor of full-time status would be associated with lower initial Compulsory "Have to" attributions, there was actually evidence that full-time status was associated with *higher* initial Legal attributions. While unexpected, it is possible that this result is due to full-time employees being more attuned to legal issues in the workplace. It is possible that full-time employees interpret an organization's legal structure differently, which in turn influences the meaning they ascribe to legal practices (Fuller, Edelman & Matusik, 2000). Further, given the oft-attached stigma that HR is an enforcer of policy, as well as the presence of an increasingly "legal centric" approach to HR (Roehling & Wright, 2006), full-time employees who are more attuned to organizational practices may be more apt to initially ascribe higher Legal attributions, as they see this as one of HR's main responsibilities.

Similarly, while the person-related factor of school major was significantly associated with higher initial Voluntary "Want to" attributions as expected, major was not negatively related to Compulsory "Have to" attributions as posited. These findings suggest that while majoring in a subject with an "employment focus" may indeed prompt newcomers to ascribe initial attributions that see the organization in a positive

light, major does not influence attributions that may be more negative in nature (e.g., Compulsory attributions). Interestingly, while I expected that work experience would be associated with lower initial Voluntary attributions, and higher initial Compulsory attributions, there was no convincing evidence of such an effect. While it is possible that the absence of an effect is due to the restricted range of work experience in the sample, it is also feasible that work experience simply does not play a large role in initial HR attributions.

In terms of personality-related factors, while proactive personality played a significant role in initial Voluntary attributions as expected, conscientiousness did not influence initial attributions to a significant degree. Rather, openness to experience and emotional stability emerged as stronger predictors, each sharing negative relationships with Trends and Legal attributions, respectively. Individuals high in openness are characterized by their insightfulness and non-judgmental natures (e.g., McCrae & John, 1992), thus individuals who are high in this personality dimension may be more likely to see the value in trying new trends, or benchmarking competitors. In the same way, the negative relationship between emotional stability and Legal attributions may exist because individuals who are high in emotional stability may be less likely to assume that the organization has its HR practices in place for compulsory, legal reasons. Individuals high in emotional stability tend to exhibit confidence and resourcefulness (e.g., Goldman, 1990), and it is possible that such individuals may simply be more rational in their process of ascribing attributions, and may be less prone to assuming compulsory, "have to" reasons for practices. In contrast, individuals who exhibit low levels of emotional stability may be more superstitious and nervous (e.g., Goldberg, 1990) and

might be more apt to assume that the organization is "in it for itself," and is only interested in avoiding legal concerns.

HR Attributions over Time

Another way that this dissertation adds to our understanding of the HR attribution literature is its examination of HR attributions over time. While each of the Compulsory "Have to" attributions increased as expected, the results for the Voluntary "Want to" attributions ran counter to the original hypothesis, remaining relatively stagnant over time. If Well-Being attributions indeed remain this stable, it suggests that initial levels of this attribution are extremely important, as they set the tone for a newcomer's perceptions of Well-Being. Taking the unexpected finding regarding Trends into account, it is possible that employees increasingly see HR practices as being in place due to Trends simply because upon entry to the organization they receive more exposure to the changing norms and patterns associated with their organization's industry (e.g., Gordon, 1991). As they become more familiar with these, they are able to see how adopting these trends may be useful to the organization (e.g., Bamberger & Fiegenbaum, 1996). In this way, Trends can still be considered a Voluntary "Want to" attribution, as the employer is seen as putting it HR practices in place because it wants to better position itself relative to competitors.

Predictors of HR Information Sources and their Moderating Role

This dissertation also adds to our understanding of the socialization literature by examining how this process applies to learning about HR practices and policies. In addition to finding that employment status as a full-time employee, school major, and proactive personality are associated with a higher initial use of both formal and informal

sources of HR information, results indicate that newcomers' use of informal and formal sources increases over time. While I expected that the use of formal sources of HR information would decrease over time, this finding is interesting, as it suggests the presence of a dual process of information seeking. Even as newcomers increase their use of informal sources of HR information (e.g., coworkers), they continue to ramp up their use of formal sources of information (e.g., HR department personnel). Thus, while socially-derived sources appear to grow in use over time, it would seem that newcomers continue to rely on formal sources for information about HR practices. This suggests that HR departments are not only important sources of information during the recruitment and orientation phase (Jones, 1986), but they continue to play an important role during the socialization period.

My examination of the potential moderating role of HR information source frequency, credibility, and ease of access on trends in HR attributions also extends our understanding by integrating the HR attributions and socialization literatures, Overall, I found evidence that the frequency, perceived credibility, and perceived ease of accessing formal sources of HR information may mitigate the rise in Legal attributions. This finding suggests that HR department personnel can play an important role in reducing this type of compulsory attribution provided that they are easily available to newcomers, and are seen as credible sources of information.

HR Attributions and Organizational Commitment

In addition to addressing the main research questions of this study, the data also allowed an initial examination of how individual-level HR attributions may be associated with subsequent organizational commitment. While these findings should be

considered preliminary, they show evidence that the voluntary attribution of Employee Well-Being bears a significant, positive association with organizational commitment, even while controlling for the other HR attributions and work-, person-, and personality-related factors. This finding alludes to the importance of Well-Being attributions, as they appear to exert more influence on an important attitudinal variable—organizational commitment—than other HR attributions. Combined with the evidence that Well-Being attributions remain relatively stable over time, it is apparent that initial Well-Being attributions are of particular importance.

Theoretical Contributions

Overall, this study makes four main contributions to the HR literature. First, it extends our understanding of HR attributions by examining the temporal nature of this construct. As the first known study to explore trends in HR attributions over time, this research offers insight into the nature of these employee perceptions. While cross-sectional research in this area has provided a vital introduction and initial exploration of this construct, given that HR attributions assess an individual's *ongoing* experience with HR practices (Nishii et al., 2008), it is necessary to expand on existing theoretical underpinnings to acknowledge the complex, temporal nature of this construct. Understanding that HR attributions have a temporal structure is important, as it has implications for future study of this construct. For instance, these results suggest the timing of data collection may influence the level of HR attributions captured.

Second, this study expands upon the existing HR attribution typology by introducing a new category of Trends/Benchmarking, and revising an existing category (Union Compliance) to focus on Legal attributions. Further, the Voluntary and

Compulsory categories introduced in this paper provide an alternate way to think about these attributions. As stated earlier, because these new categories provide a way to think about HR attributions from the employee perspective, some of the existing attribution categories (e.g., cost control) may be interpreted differently than in the original model. While these new/revised attributions and categories are not meant to replace those in Nishii et al.'s (2008) existing typology, their introduction extends the theoretical structure of HR attributions, and offers researchers new ways to think about this construct.

Third, this study offers the first known empirical investigation of potential predictors of initial HR attributions. In addition to extending the nomological net surrounding HR attributions, this early work on HR attribution predictors offers researchers additional theoretical insight into the factors that may influence HR attributions. By examining how different work-related, person-related, and personality factors influence HR attributions, this study further develops this construct by offering researchers potential predictors and controls to use in future study.

Fourth, this paper integrates theories of social interaction with the HR literature to explore potential moderators of HR attribution trends by examining the role of informal and formal sources of HR information. In addition to showing how such theory can be usefully applied to the study of HR practices, this examination answers calls for research investigating the role of contextual factors in workplace phenomena (e.g., Ferris et al., 1998). While not a main focus of the paper, this study also provides the first known examination of factors influencing initial HR information source use and patterns of use over time.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, this study also provides information that may help to improve organizational operations. Companies expend vast resources recruiting employees and projecting a favorable image to applicants (e.g., Van Maanen, 1975). During this process they espouse certain HR policies and practices, expecting that the image they portray will be lasting, and that newcomers will continue to see these policies and practices in the way they were initially presented. In essence, organizations simply assume that their voice is the strongest, and that HR practices will work as intended and espoused. While the results of the current study show that newcomers do indeed use the organization for information about HR practices, the findings also illustrate how newcomers turn to coworkers as sources of HR information. This suggests that organizations would be well-advised to ensure that these informal sources of information have the most up-to-date and accurate information about the organization's HR practices. This entails supporting an effective communication structure that encourages the dissemination of factual information across organizational actors. Methods of communication might include printed literature (e.g., pamphlets, newletters), email announcements, or perhaps face-to-face information sharing sessions.

In terms of content, employers should continue to provide information about training, benefits, career development, and work-life balance to employees beyond initial orientation and socialization. Specifically, employers might consider discussing the reasoning behind their HR practices. Such disclosure might help to alleviate potential "rumor mills" (Nicholson, 1998), and would establish HR departments as the "go-to" source for information. Since newcomers continue to use formal sources of HR

information, it is important to ensure that these channels of information remain open to employees, and that the information provided therein is reliable and current.

In addition, employers would be well-advised to continue emphasizing their commitment to employee well-being. Although the current study found that Well-being attributions remained stable over time, it is possible that this could change if employers were to emphasize their commitment to well-being beyond initial socialization. While organizations may indeed work to portray a favorable image to applicants and new employees (Van Maanen, 1975), it is possible that this effort stops after the employee enters the organization, as the goal of attracting the new employee has been accomplished. If the organization were to continue emphasizing their commitment to well-being, there might be a corresponding increase in Well-being attributions. Given the demonstrated importance of these attributions, employers might consider exploring this practice.

Limitations and Future Research

As the first study to undertake an examination of HR attributions and HR information source use over time, this dissertation represents a good first step in unpacking the manner in which HR attributions and HR information source use change over time, as well as the way that source use impacts HR attributions. However, as with any empirical investigation, the current study has some limitations that bear mentioning.

One limitation concerns the student sample, as it could be argued that it is not representative of full-time, long-term, new hires. However, while a sample of full-time new hires would be ideal, the current sample is appropriate, as it contained individuals who are quite representative of many organizational newcomers—college students and

recent graduates. In addition, the nature of the student sample and the ability to access cohorts of individuals who were starting employment at the same time allowed me to obtain important baseline measures of HR attributions and HR information source use that may not have been obtainable in a different setting. Further, given that students pursuing internships and co-ops are actively appraising their organization as a potential future employer, it can be argued that a student sample engaged in actual internships is quite representative of the broader newcomer pool.

The overall study time frame could also be considered a limitation. Although three months is generally considered an acceptable period during which to study changes in perceptions, it would be informative to examine HR information source use over a longer period of time. For instance, it has been noted that different sources of information may become more or less salient over time (Feldman, 1976; Ostroff & Kowloski, 1992). This points to a need for conducted across larger time periods, as this may capture curvilinear effects. Given the role that sources of HR information may play in HR attributions, research examining changes in HR attributions across larger spans of time is also recommended. While the current study focused on changes in these perceptions during initial socialization, it would be fruitful to engage in longer investigations to assess potential curvilinearity. Further, it would be very interesting to examine the patterns in these perceptions for non-newcomers.

In addition to trends over time, research on additional predictors of initial HR attributions is encouraged. While this study undertook an examination of a number of person-, work-, and personality-related predictors, there are a myriad of other factors which may influence these initial HR attributions. Future research exploring other

predictors, such as level of prior knowledge about the organization, orientation practices, and socialization tactics is encouraged.

Finally, I encourage researchers to continue this area of inquiry by conducting research using field samples from organizations. While the current study is a great first step, additional research using field data is necessary, as we must investigate how these findings hold across different organizational contexts (Johns, 2006), and across different types of employees.

CONCLUSION

The current paper offers a longitudinal, empirical investigation of potential predictors of initial HR attributions, changes in HR attributions over time, and the moderating role of formal and informal sources of HR practice information. As the first study to address these questions, this paper makes several theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the human resources literature by unpacking the process of HR attributions, as well as applying socialization theory to explore how sources of HR information influence HR attributions over time. As such, this paper expands upon HR attribution theory to examine the stability of these perceptions and their potential predictors. The current study is also important from a practical perspective, as it may help to inform our understanding of how resources should be allocated in the recruitment and newcomer onboarding process.

APPENDIX

Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time, Using Only Participants Who Completed All Four Survey Waves

	Well-Being				Trends			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Intercept	3.87***	3.42***	1.94***	1.72**	3.45***	2.97***	2.66***	2.61***
Time	- 0.01	0.00	0.00	- 0.02	0.15***	0.15***	0.15***	0.17***
Coop	0.28			0.16	0.16			- 0.03
FT Employee	0.04			- 0.21	0.02			- 0.25
Previous Employee	- 0.23			- 0.16	- 0.01			0.06
Personal Referral	0.08			- 0.02	- 0.15			- 0.26†
Work Exp. (months)		0.00		0.01		0.00		0.00
Major		0.29*		0.20		0.44**		0.31†
Gender		0.23*		0.25†		0.17		0.12
Proactive Personality			0.39***	0.37**			0.28*	0.41**
Openness to Experience			- 0.09	- 0.12			- 0.16†	- 0.23*
Conscientiousness			0.05	0.09			- 0.02	0.03
Emotional Stability			0.19***	0.17†			0.00	- 0.02
Agreeableness			0.03	0.02			0.05	- 0.01
Extraversion			- 0.03	- 0.05			0.03	- 0.02

N = 740 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Random Coefficient Modeling: HR Attributions over Time, Using Only Participants Who Completed All Four Survey Waves (cont.)

	Legal				Costs			
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16
Intercept	3.28***	3.08***	4.28***	4.26***	3.02***	2.84***	3.96***	4.19***
Time	0.10**	0.11***	0.11***	0.11***	0.10**	0.10***	0.10***	0.09**
Coop	- 0.05			- 0.13	0.24			0.13
FT Employee	0.53*			0.38*	0.34			0.13
Previous Employee	0.06			0.09	- 0.07			- 0.16
Personal Referral	- 0.18			- 0.22	- 0.10			- 0.08
Work Exp. (months)		- 0.01**		- 0.02**		- 0.01*		- 0.01*
Major		- 0.06		0.04		- 0.27*		- 0.17
Gender		0.17		0.10		0.17†		0.10
Proactive Personality			- 0.08	0.01			- 0.02	0.05
Openness to Experience			- 0.15†	- 0.31**			- 0.18*	- 0.32**
Conscientiousness			0.03	0.12			- 0.10	- 0.06
Emotional Stability			- 0.14†	- 0.13			- 0.05	- 0.02
Agreeableness			0.07	0.06			0.12	0.08
Extraversion			- 0.03	- 0.02			- 0.05	- 0.04

N = 740 observations.
† $p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

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